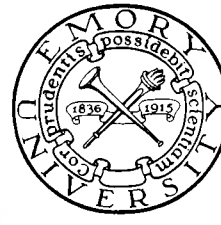
THE WIDOW AND THE MARQUESS

BY THEODORE HOOK



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THE WIDOW,

AND

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OR,

LOVE AND PRIDE.

BY

THEODORE HOOK,

AUTHOR OF
"GILBERT GURNEY," "MAXWELL," "THE PARSON'S DAUGHTER,"
ETC. ETC.

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THE WIDOW

CHAPTER I.

"At three to-morrow, then," said Charles Saville.

The assenting look of the beautiful girl to whom these words were addressed in a whisper, left no doubt upon Charles's mind of the punctuality of her attention to the appointment which he had just made to call in Harley Street, and form one of a party, which was to visit that most instructive and entertaining receptacle for natural curiosities, the Zoological Garden in the Regent's Park.

The beautiful girl was speedily hurried away from his side by her mother, and consigned to the care of an elderly gentleman; and after receiving an injunction to wrap her shawl closely about her, was by the same elderly gentleman handed down the Opera House staircase, followed by the said affectionate mother, who had accepted the arm of the aforesaid Charles Saville.

They reached the carriage which "stopped the way." The elderly gentleman deposited his treasure within it, and then having placed her mother by her side, bowed somewhat coldly to Saville, and stepped into the chariot himself. Flip, flap, flop, went the steps, bang went the door, up went the glass, up jumped the servant at the word "Home," off dashed the horses, and away went the carriage, leaving Saville (somewhat wounded by the abruptness of the parting,) under the Haymarket Colonnade encircled by a cloud of smoke rising from the surrounding links, and enveloped in a still deeper cloud of thought and mystification.

Saville had made his acquaintance with Mrs. Franklin and her daughter Harriet (the ladies in the carriage,) early in the season which was now drawing to a close; to the latter he became daily and hourly more attached, and, truth to be told, the development of her amiable character and

intellectual qualities entirely justified the opinion which he had formed of her on their first introduction to each other. Mrs. Franklin liked him, found him agreeable, good-natured, and kind, and received him cordially and warmly at her house, where for the last five or six weeks he had been a very frequent visitor.

The intercourse, however, between the young people, constant as it had been, gave rise to no suspicions in the mind of Harriet's mother, that any thing of a tenderer nature than friendship would be its result; and it is extremely probable that she would have gone on in this blissful state of security for months and years, had not her suspicions been awakened by her elderly and worldly friend Mr. John Smith, who, on his first visit in Harley Street, after his return to London, saw at a glance the real state of the case, and established in his own mind the extent to which the attachment between the lovers, as he decided them to be, had already gone.

Mr. Smith, it must be mentioned, was not wholly disinterested in the investigation of this delicate matter. He had been a particularly intimate friend of Miss Franklin s father, he continued the particularly intimate friend of Miss Franklin's mother, and this of itself might be considered quite sufficient reason for his anxiety with regard to the welfare and prosperity of Miss Franklin herself; but this was not all, — Mr. Smith had formed the resolution of uniting his fate with the Franklins, by a more tender and permanent connection, and had, since his return from Italy, where he much rejoiced to pass his winters, become as constant a visitor at the house of his late friend, as Charles Saville; and it was in consequence of thus frequently meeting him and the young lady together, that he had come to the conclusion, that it was quite right Mrs. Franklin should be put upon her guard with respect to the gentle Philander, whose fortune was purely personal, and covered with his hat; he had, in fact, nothing but an allowance of three or four hundred a year, and a dim and distant prospect of success at the bar, towards which, at the period we now refer to, he was eating his way, in Lincoln's Inn Hall.

In the eyes of Mr. Smith, who was immensely rich, no sin was so crying, no shame so fatal, as poverty. Having by industry and application to mercantile pursuits amassed a vast fortune, he felt that, in respecting wealth in others, he was paying himself a tacit compliment; and having pretty well ascertained the amount of the possessions and expectations of Charles Saville, he thought the moment had arrived, when the eyes of his excellent friend should be opened to the dangerous position in which her lovely daughter was placed, by the permission of such an intimacy as evidently existed between her and the ill-starred object of the old gentleman's anger and suspicion.

It was rather unfortunate, by way of a coincidence, that this most opulent and respectable gentleman should have fixed one o'clock of the following day for a conversation with Mrs. Franklin, upon the subject of her daughter's sentiments towards Mr. Saville, who, it will be recollected, intended to do himself the honour of calling in Harley Street at three.

The moment Harriet heard of the arrangement, she felt a sort of intuitive certainty as to what would be the subject of the elderly gentleman's observations; in her confidence touching which she was greatly supported by the circumstance of his having, during the preceding evening, thrown out one or two gentle hints of his displeasure at the intimacy which he perceived to exist between her and the young lawyer. That she dreaded the consequences of his discussion with her mother, is quite sufficient proof of the justice of Mr. Smith's suspicions: a sleepless night of anxious thoughts was the result of Mrs. Franklin's announcement of his intention; and when she came to breakfast, there was evidence in Harriet's eyes that she had shed abundance of tears.

The sound of the clock striking one was followed almost instantaneously by the arrival of Mr. Smith; who, much to Harriet's relief, preferred her absence from the lecture he was about to read, and begged to be left *tête-à-tête* with her mamma.

One has heard of the proverb which treats of the dexterity of killing two birds with one stone: the respectable

Smith, at the moment to which we are referring, afforded in his own person a beautiful illustration of the venerable adage; for at the instant that his knock at the door in Harley Street set Harriet's heart in a flutter of fear, it put that of her mamma into a state of gentle agitation with hope.

Mrs. Franklin had nothing to live upon but a jointure which, at her death, reverted to the family of her late husband, and Harriet had, in all the world, but four or five thousand pounds. From what had at different times escaped Mr. Smith's white lips, she had for more than two years expected that which she now felt certain was at hand; and although the respectable gentleman would be her third husband, still it would be so desirable a thing in point of money and comfort — for a lone woman needs a protector — and of such wonderful advantage to dear Harriet, that the plump and buxom widow of fifty-five saw no just let, hindrance, or impediment to her acceptance of the "lean and slippered" bosom friend of her late husband, at the age of sixty-four.

Thus were two hearts nearly allied to each other set beating with very different passions, while the respectable Smith proceeded to open his mind to the senior lady of the two. *We* call him respectable from his age and station; but he *had* a *sobriquet:* he was generally known in the extensive circle of his own acquaintance as Twaddle Smith. Smith is a common name, and it is absolutely necessary to prefix some distinctive epithet to it in order to mark the "man." The "Rejected Addresses" have signalised two Smiths — Adam Smith is secured from the general confusion by the peculiarity of his Christian name (if Christian name Adam can be called)—Sidney Smith, the revered leader of battles, and Sidney Smith, the reverend conductor of reviews, are also well distinguished from the common Smithfield herd; and so, in order to point the moral or adorn the tale, our elderly friend just mentioned was always called *Twaddle* Smith, for reasons, the value of which the reader will probably best appreciate, after having been permitted to hear the subject-matter of his dialogue with his fat, fair, and fifty-five friend, Mrs. Franklin.

"Mrs. F." said Mr. Smith, — it was a way he had of *initialising* — "I have long wished to speak to you upon certain matters connected with the state and arrangement of your family and establishment, and I have been at length driven peremptorily to put my design into execution, by circumstances which appear to me to be extremely likely to embarrass you if they continue in their present state."

"I shall be ready and too happy," said the expectant widow, "to adopt any suggestions which *you* may throw out for the better regulation of my little family affairs."

"I will be candid upon one point in the outset," said Mr. Smith; "I think that your favourite, Mr. Saville, is here considerably more than he should be. He is a beggar; smart and pert, I admit, and sees, I dare say, a good deal of what is called the world; but I cannot endure that flippant manner with which he speaks upon all subjects, — a fellow of three hundred a year, ma'am, has no right to talk so."

"I never observed that sort of thing," said Mrs. Franklin; "I think him pleasant and good-humoured"——

"So does Harriet," said Mr. Smith. "However, my dear madam, if what I have more particularly to propose for your consideration to-day, should prove acceptable to you, all *that* will be remedied by your removal, for some time, from the metropolis."

"I am all attention," said Mrs. Franklin.

"There is a prejudice," said her elderly companion "which has very generally obtained, but which I am sure is very ill founded, that a man long accustomed to bachelor habits is ill calculated to understand the happiness of married life; I repeat, my dear Mrs. Franklin, that I am convinced of the fallacy of this opinion, or, as I before called it, prejudice."

"I really don't see," said Mrs. Franklin, who thought that she already began to perceive the drift of her most respectable friend's observations, "I really don't see why a man who has long lived single should be the less capable of appreciating the advantages of matrimony."

"You agree with me, then," said Mr. Smith, "and I

agree with you as to the advantages of which you speak — and who so well as a lady who has already twice entered the happy state? There can be no testimony so favourable to matrimony as a second marriage; for who would return to a course of life after having been released from it, had it not been agreeable?"

"I quite coincide with you there," said Mrs. Franklin, who began to feel the blood mounting into her cheeks, and her heart bumping not very gently in her bosom; "I am sure, Mr. Smith, that as far as personal feelings go, a second, or even a third marriage, is practically the greatest compliment to those who are gone; for, as you have justly observed, who would contract a second matrimonial engagement if they had not been happy in the first?"

"Or who," said Mr. Smith, with an extremely gallant smile, "would enter into a third, unless she had been happy in the two former ones?"

Mrs. Franklin smiled at the remark, which was a perfect corroboration of all her best suspicions.

Mr. Smith was old, but he was rich — he was dull and prosy, but then he was good-natured and kind. He had no family connections, although his namesakes were numerous; and she thought, considering the slender character of her jointure, and the graceful smallness of her daughter's fortune, that if, as she foresaw, he intended to make her the offer, she would "pluck up a spirit," and take him as her third husband, not less estimable in her eyes from having been the intimate friend of her late much lamented second.

"I confess, Mrs. F.," said the exemplary proser, "that having now retired from business of every kind, I feel time hang heavy on my hands. I don't see to read very well; I am too old to learn. I have nothing to write about, and although I belong to a most excellent and convenient club at the bottom of St. James's Street, I find few contemporaries, or indeed companions there. I think I should like quiet and a fine climate, and, if I could establish myself, return to Italy, the garden of the world, for which I contracted a feeling of devotion when much younger, and to which I constantly look back with a longing anxiety to return to it."

"What could be more delightful?" said Mrs. Franklin.

"Now, what is your opinion?" said Mr. Smith. "I am quite aware that I am a little farther advanced in life than the general run of bridegrooms; but do you think — ah! I see you smile — do you think I might find a being disposed to join her fate to mine, and permit me to make her the sole object of all my care and affection?"

"Dear Mr. Smith," said Mrs. Franklin, "how very oddly you talk! how should *I* know?"

"And yet," said Mr. Smith, "you are the only person in the world whom I should desire to consult upon the subject. Franklin, poor fellow, was considerably your senior when you were married; and yet, pardon me for recurring to what is lost to us for ever, you were as happy as people could be."

"Very true," said the lady; "and I am quite sure that any people may live happily and comfortably who, when they become, as in time they must, acquainted and familiarised with each other's tempers and dispositions, make up their minds to concede a little now and then; for as I have ever found it, the subjects of disagreement between men and their wives are generally matters of very trivial importance in themselves."

"I flatter myself that in the event of succeeding in my object, I should be found quite ready to adopt your ideas upon these points," said the matured lover; "and thus encouraged, I honestly admit that I consider my hopes of future comfort and enjoyment to be in your hands."

"My dear sir!" said Mrs. Franklin.

"So it is," said the elderly gentleman. "I think you must have observed the general tenor of my conduct and conversation for the last few days; and I have no difficulty in throwing myself upon your consideration. I never have seen a being calculated to form my happiness until now; and having made the admission, I shall wait an answer with a patience proportioned to my anxiety."

"Why, really," said Mrs. Franklin, "I — I declare to you, you have taken me so completely by surprise that ——"

"Did Harriet never mention any thing to you of what I have said to her upon the subject?"

"Harriet," said Mrs. Franklin, "not she; have you spoken to *her?*"

"Not, perhaps, in direct terms," said Mr. Smith; "but I have thrown out such hints as I thought she could not fail to understand."

"But why address *her* in the first instance?" said Mrs. Franklin; "I honestly confess that her position as relative to mine, is one of the difficulties I feel in listening to the proposition — what would become of *her?*"

"Of course," said Mr. Smith, "she would go to Italy."

"But that might interfere with her prospects," said the mother.

"Her prospects!" said the old gentleman; "of course our prospects would be in common."

"Oh, I am quite sure of your honour and generosity," said Mrs. Franklin; "but at her time of life, she naturally expects attention and beaux, or, as we used to call them in former days, Mr. S., sweethearts."

"Why, to be sure," replied the lover, "and naturally enough; but not after she marries."

"Oh! no," said the lady; "but she is not married yet."

"But," said Smith, "going to be, I hope."

"What, to Mr. Saville?" said her mother; "how can you fancy such a thing — why, you say yourself the man's a beggar."

"I flattered myself, I had enlightened you upon *this* subject," said the elderly gentleman. "What I mean is that Harriet will not hesitate to accept of any advantageous offer which you yourself might approve; she would not suffer any of the common prejudices against what is called a sad disparity of age to interfere with her comfortable and respectable establishment in life."

"She has not," said Mrs. Franklin, "that I know of, had any occasion to form a determination upon such a proposal."

"The time, then, has arrived," said the elderly Smith,

getting animated. "Surely I have already said sufficient with regard to my views, intentions, hopes, and propositions."

"Ay," said Mrs. Franklin, "as far as you and I are concerned, Mr. Smith; but however willing I might be to listen to your solicitations, I suspect the effect produced upon *her*, by any such arrangement, would not very materially change her condition."

"My dear Mrs. Franklin," said Smith, who found that his aim was mistaken, and his object misunderstood, "I fear I have not been sufficiently explicit in my conversation. You mistake me; my proposition applies to Harriet; her hand I solicit; and my present view is to interest you in my behalf, and induce you not only to sanction my offer, but support it with your influence and authority."

"My dear sir," said Mrs. Franklin, opening her eyes to their very greatest width, and elevating her eyebrows to their extreme altitude, "you surprise me! — Harriet — why, she is a mere child."

"I am quite aware, as I before mentioned," said the matured swain, "that there exists a 'disparity of age' between us; but still I flatter myself that her happiness will not be endangered by our union; and I hope more especially for your aid and assistance in obtaining her consent, because, if I do not forget, your first marriage was made under somewhat similar circumstances: there was a 'disparity of age' in *that* case, and——"

"You are perfectly right," said Mrs. Franklin, who, although greatly disappointed at the moment, by her companion's announcement of the real object of his affections, suddenly collected herself sufficiently to run through a hasty calculation in her mind, the result of which was, that Harriet would, if she married him, eventually become the possessor of all the wealth of the respectable Crœsus before her; and that, giving him the fair chances of an insurance office annuity table, he must infallibly leave her a young and blooming widow; circumstances, of the value and importance of which she was quite aware, from having undergone a similar process herself. So far, therefore, from checking the ardour of the swain, she confined her

present exertions to concealing from him the mistake into which she had at first fallen, by fancying herself the goddess of his idolatry; and concluded a brief but interesting conversation, by sending for Harriet herself; and having given her counsel for her conduct in accordance with her own views of the merits of the case, led her, loth enough, to the drawing-room, where the *aspirant* to her hand was waiting in breathless anxiety, and left the ill-assorted pair to their own inventions.

It was by this time just three o'clock; and scarcely had that hour arrived when the punctual and devoted Saville's well-known knock was sounded on the door. He was expected and admitted; and as the servants could know nothing of what was passing in the higher circles of the family, was ushered into the room where Corydon and Phyllis were billing and cooing. Any thing much more unlucky could not well have happened. Saville in a moment felt himself *de trop*. Smith scarcely recognised him, but there were tears in Harriet's eyes. Any attempt to rally would have been vain; and Charles was only rescued from his painful dilemma by a message from Mrs. Franklin, who begged him to come to her in her boudoir.

The conversation which passed between the parent and the pretender to Harriet's love was brief and bitter. Anticipating considerable difficulty in persuading her daughter into the very advantageous match now proposed, she did not think it wise, or just, or prudent, or proper, to tell Saville distinctly or positively that she was "otherwise disposed of." She liked Saville extremely, and did not desire to wound his feelings more deeply than necessary; indeed, a most whimsical notion came into her head, to which, as she never mentioned it except in strict confidence, it may appear unfair to allude, which was neither more nor less than the faint possibility of inducing Saville to change the direction of his affections in favour of herself; for Saville had, during his acquaintance with the Franklins, acted so sedulously upon the proverbial advice that

> "He who would the daughter win,
> Must with the mother first begin,"

that Mrs. Franklin, who moreover thought it might be

well to offer her Harriet a practical justification of unequal marriages, was not quite sure that she might not be accepted by a young man, although she had been overlooked by the older one. Mrs. Franklin, in making this calculation, throwing into the favourable scale the fact, that Saville was poor, and she was personally rich, and an opinion which she entertained that the lover's assiduities displayed to her daughter were considerably stimulated by a belief in her wealth, the histories about which were all without foundation. At all events, Mrs. Franklin wished to make Saville feel as easy as possible; and therefore, in a few hurried words, she endeavoured to explain that their party to the Zoological Gardens was temporarily postponed, but that she would let him know the moment it was rearranged.

Having said this and rang the bell, she advanced so rapidly upon the astonished Saville, that he was obliged to back out of the room in double quick time, convinced in his own mind, that whether he was destined or not ever to see the nyl-ghaus, zebras, emus, bears, and bisons, of the Regent's Park, it was a matter of infinitely less probability that he should soon again behold the gentle, amiable, and beautiful Harriet Franklin.

CHAPTER II.

It must be confessed, that the sudden appearance of Charles Saville in the drawing-room was anything but gratifying to the feelings of Mr. Smith, and little calculated to further his views with the young object of his affections. He came like a reproaching spirit, and stood before his love, and she acknowledged the rebuke which he thus tacitly and unconsciously gave; for, whatever might be his misgivings with regard to his own ultimate success, it had not yet flashed into his mind that the silver-headed Smith, he of the Twaddle, cased in a sable coat, and black satin shorts, shining like sticking-plaster, was doomed to be his rival.

It is strange, and every hour we live the feeling grows upon reflection, stronger still, that the great and certain change which time inevitably works on the human mind and constitution, is, from its gradual and gentle course, imperceptible to the individual "worked upon," unless some great and sudden accession of disease falls upon him. the comparison between what he *was* at twenty-four and fifty-five, is never made by the subject himself; the only comparison *he* makes, is between Monday last and Tuesday last, in which brief space no difference arises; and thus it is, that if blest with health—and if with health the animal spirits continue—a man from constant habitude, feeling no change in himself from day to day, goes on believing that others see no change in him; and it is rather to this natural imperceptibility of physical alteration, than to senile childishness, or matured vanity, that we find men advanced in life like our present friend Smith, presenting themselves to the favour of blooming girls, who were unborn at the period from which these respectable lovers date their perfection, and at which they set up their standard, and who seeing nothing but what is placed before them, cannot comprehend how the corpulent Mr. Fussocks, or the lanky Mr. Latham, can have the impertinence or temerity to enter the lists of love or flirtation at his time of life.

Smith, twaddler as he was, was, however, a man of plain common sense; he saw in Harriet a being calculated, if she could divest her mind of the very small quantity of romance which it possessed, to make any man happy. He put into the opposite scale to his advanced age the increased luxuries and comforts which the advantage of his fortune would secure to her; and considered from the gentleness and steadiness of the young lady's character and disposition, that she would consider the case dispassionately, and eventually prefer the certainty of opulence through life, to the precarious shiftings to which she might be exposed if she united herself to an idle student at law, who possessed too much versatility of genius to plod his way through the heavy road to the high places of the profession, and who, if he married, would in all pro-

bability devote himself more assiduously to the silk gown of his wife, than the stuff one of his profession.

But Smith, old and experienced as he was, miscalculated; he fell into the commonly received error of mistaking gentleness for weakness, and diffidence for want of energy. Harriet was unassuming and tender, and full of feeling; but she could resist oppression and withstand injustice. To be sure the battle being in modern times generally to the strong, the influence of her mother, upon whom she depended for every thing in the way of fortune she was to possess, strengthened and enforced by that of Mr. Smith, the intimate and favoured friend of her father, required no trifling exertion to counteract its effects.

Harriet listened calmly and patiently to the elaborated lecture which Mr. Smith was pleased to deliver upon the philosophy of love, and the pre-eminent advantages of that peculiar species of passion which is founded upon esteem, and a long acquaintance with the merits and virtues of the desired object, for nearly two hours; at the termination of which period, she flattered herself that she had dexterously contrived a reprieve for herself, by telling her respectable suitor that she must, in the first instance, consult her mother, and that after referring the whole subject to her consideration, she would, in the course of the evening, pronounce her own decision upon it.

This delay was by no means unpleasant to either party. Smith was gratified by receiving this sort of qualified attention to his proposal instead of a plump denial, and Harriet delighted in giving herself an opportunity of discussing it with her mother, conscious as she was of a preference for Charles Saville, and satisfied, even putting *that* out of the question, that the destruction of her happiness would be the inevitable consequence of her filial obedience.

Mr. Smith, at this juncture of the campaign, was not quite decided as to the next step he should take in the siege, which it appears he was carrying on as systematically as the French proceeded with that of Antwerp; he felt himself already in the third parallel, and was nearly as much surprised as Gerard at the faint opposition he had

met with from the garrison; but, like that hero upon the occasion to which I refer, he doubted the security of the calm which he was suffered to enjoy, and attributed the facility with which he had been permitted to make his advances, to a secret determination on the part of the besieged to undermine and blow him up the moment he attempted the storm.

If, thought he, I take my hat and go, at this crisis, it may seem as if I had been discouraged, and were dissatisfied with my reception; if I hastily follow up what I believe to be a blow, I shall violate the truce to which I have agreed, and break in upon Harriet's design of a conference with her mother; therefore will I steer the middle course, and merely give Mrs. Franklin the outline of my conversation with her daughter, and having thus "reported progress," ask leave to "come again to-morrow."

What his prudence and judgment suggested in this behoof, the cautious Smith forthwith put into practice; and having found the much excited parent just recovering from the exertion of having ejected poor Charles Saville, imparted to her the particulars of his dialogue with Miss Franklin, and referring to the condition which she had exacted, or which rather he had conceded to her suggestion, proposed a visit the following day at two.

Harriet had a stormy evening before her — with all her filial obedience and the partiality which natural affection necessarily begets, she could not blind herself to the feline feeling which prompted her excellent parent to be the most amiable of amiables while things went smoothly, but which drove her into an excess of passion if she were ruffled or thwarted; yet she resolved to make one effort for Charles Saville, who, although constantly "fended off," as the sailors say, never relaxed in his efforts to evince to her the sincerity of his attachment.

It should, perhaps, be mentioned, that several swains had been caught by Harriet's charms before our young lawyer had "entered himself" in the list of her suitors; at present the house was well rid of them. A white-haired viscount, and a red-haired baronet, had been numbered in her train, but they had trained off, upon finding, much to

their chagrin and disappointment, that Harriet's boasted fortune was visionary; still, however, Mrs. Franklin talked of Lord Pertwood and Sir Harry Fitch in such a manner as to let Saville understand what sort of lovers Harriet had *discarded*, and consequently what sort of lovers she felt she had a right to expect. Saville, who knew from the earliest stage of their acquaintance, the extent of Miss Franklin's precarious expectations, rendered in his eye more precarious still by the very matrimonial disposition of her already twice married mother, felt neither care nor anxiety upon the subject — he talked of his profession, ardently anticipated success, and in the very few *tête-à-tête* conversations which he had been lucky enough to enjoy with his Dulcinea, perfectly convinced her that he loved her for what she was, and not for what she had; and that he had not an interested thought or wish concerning her.

Dutiful as she was, grateful to Mr. Smith as she mighbe, was it possible she should eternally relinquish such a lover without a struggle? Nor was her embarrassment, after the departure of her new old lover, at all diminished by her anxiety to know how poor Charles had departed; whether he had been so far enlightened upon the subject of the *tête-à-tête* which he had unintentionally broken in upon, as to destroy all his hopes; or whether her mother, acting upon her usual prudential system, had not committed herself upon a point, where, in fact, she was not yet perfectly secure of success. Poor girl, she was dreadfully agitated, and her tremour did by no means cease when her maid Johnstone, who, for the express purpose of watching his departure, had craned her neck out of one of the windows of her young lady's dressing-room, pronounced Mr. Smith gone.

Saville's dismissal, as it turned out, had been any thing but harsh or uncivil: it was neither Mrs. Franklin's policy nor her disposition to be either to so amiable and accomplished a person, and one for whom it has been gently hinted she felt an especial regard. She wanted most particularly to get him away from the house at the moment of his visit, because his presence at that immediate juncture was extremely inopportune; and she charged upon him

formidably, and he fell back and retreated: but there was no explanation of the real state of affairs, no injunction not to return, no "warning off," for the same smouldering feeling in the matron's heart, which sometimes made her think she might change her name again, induced her to recollect that if Harriet should become the rich wife of old Mr. Smith, there would exist fewer objections to her assuming the character of helpmate to the young Mr. Saville. This sounds odd as a matter of calculation and of narration—but we are all odd creatures—and it is human nature.

So trifling, however, had been the effect of Mrs. Franklin's ejection of her daughter's lover, upon the lover himself, that he left the house without any serious apprehension that he might never enter it again. He was conscious of a strange excitement in Mrs. Franklin's manner, and he thought the breaking up of the party to the Zoological Gardens abrupt and strange; and he saw that there was an anxiety to get him away from Harriet and Mr. Smith in the drawing-room; but none of these things opened his eyes to the real state of the case. Smith he hated, merely because he appeared to be upon extremely familiar terms with Harriet; but he was not jealous of him, nor did an idea of a rival in his person ever enter his head. He was quite conscious that he was his enemy in the family; but that he attributed merely to the justifying cause of his own poverty, and the tender care of Miss Franklin's interests, which was taken by the white-headed gentleman in the court-plaster shorts, in the character of friend of her late father, trustee of his property and executor of his will,—but for himself, the idea never struck him. And as he walked along, just conscious of a disagreeable sensation,—for to a lover the slightest variation of conduct in any body concerned or connected with the object of his affection is instantaneously felt,—a dread that the white-haired viscount was "on again," and that Smith was talking over financial measures with Harriet upon that possibility, assailed him with a hideous probability, just as he was turning down Hay Hill into Berkeley Square. This horrid vision lasted till he had passed the end of Bruton

Street, and there the "fetch" of the red-haired baronet, in the very act of being accepted by his dearest Harriet, appeared before him; and thus by turns all things which he fancied possible or probable to happen to overturn his hopes, passed through his mind; while the only thing which seriously threatened and truly endangered his happiness never once entered into his calculations.

It would be doing a serious injustice to the maternal influence of Mrs. Franklin, and the filial obedience of her fair daughter, were I to attempt any description of the prolonged discussion which took place on the proposal of the elderly gentleman during the evening of the day on which it was made. The arguments adopted by the lady — the manner in which she enforced them — the resolutions she expressed with regard to the future interests of her child — her language — her action — the inducements she held out — the threats she fulminated, — all these it would be painful to detail, because it would exhibit such a scene of domestic discord and unhappiness as ought not to be submitted to the public eye. How the wonder was worked, how the great end was accomplished, therefore, the reader is not destined to know; but this fact may amply satisfy him — before eight o'clock, Harriet Franklin was irrevocably doomed to become Mrs. Smith!

There *are* mysteries in all arts, professions, and trades, which, to the uninitiated, seem miracles. What can appear more marvellous to those who know nothing about it, than that the ashes of a water plant, a thistle, or bramble, or fern, mixed up with sand and stone and flints, should, in combination, give us glass? Or who that had not considered the matter would think that we might derive a brilliant light from smoke? But glass or gas, or any other artificial product, would fall far short in exciting astonishment in the untutored mind, compared with the result of the long and animated dialogue which passed on that memorable evening between Mrs. Franklin and her daughter. It is, to be sure, enough for those who have no occasion to dive into primary causes, to "take the goods the gods provide," without labouring at inquiry and investigation; and so long as the light beams brightly, and the

glass shines clearly, what have the every-day people of the world to do with the means by which those comforts or conveniences are secured to them? So thought the anxious mother upon the present occasion; she had carried her point, she had achieved her object, and little else remained but to offer up the sacrifice on the shrine of mammon, and proceed to deck her victim for the altar.

Smith the respectable was to be at Mrs. Franklin's at two; but as it happened that the lady and her daughter had engaged themselves to accompany Mrs. Thompson, a friend and neighbour of theirs, to the Somerset House Exhibition at three, a slight discussion arose between the parent and child as to the delicacy or possibility of a young lady accepting an elderly gentleman's offer of marriage, and going to a public exhibition two hours afterwards. Breaking the engagement with Mrs. T. would look so odd — she might think something — and then Harriet did not like to remain at home; and Mr. Smith, perhaps, would like to go with them; and then there was no room in the carriage; and even if it could have been permitted that he should, upon an emergency, share the box with the coachman, his mounting was altogether out of the question; — and so at last it was decided to leave this minor point to settle itself and, at all events, suffer the Somerset House engagement to rest as it was.

It would be more agreeable, and only just to our poor dear Harriet, to let the reader into some of the arguments, and statements, and asseverations, by which Mrs. Franklin worked upon her daughter's mind and feelings, until she consented to forego the inclinations of her heart, and accept as a husband a man who would have been considered old as her father; but it would be a breach of confidence. However, it may be allowable to say, that Mrs. Franklin asserted, upon what she called good authority, that Saville was a gambler, that he was idle, dissipated, and extravagant; the fact being that he was one of the most economical young gentlemen about town; never took a card or box in his hand, drank no wine, and never was idle, except, if that could be called idleness, when he was devoting to Harriet herself the time which at least she ought not to have thought could be better spent.

In addition, however, to all these visionary vices and imaginary failings, Mrs. Franklin hurled one maternal thunderbolt at her daughter's devoted head, which finally settled the business. "Were he prudent, learned, amiable, and rich," said the elder lady to the younger, "so long as *I* live you should never marry Mr. Saville, at least with my consent; and I think, without it, you would have little cause to rejoice in the felicity of your choice."

Harriet's mind was admirably well regulated, and the state of its discipline was the more to be wondered at, considering the *hoity-toity* fly-away manner of her surviving parent; yet during this potent denunciation of her dear Charles, she certainly did see before her eyes a sort of phantasmagoria of post-chaises and horses, and hymeneal blacksmiths, and other objects therewith concomitant; they, however, speedily faded; principle overcame predilection; and, as we have already said, she sank a devoted victim to her mother's wishes.

The whole affair is an unpleasant one to think of; but, as it is a bad bit of road in the journey of our narrative, let us pull down the blinds, and jolt over it as fast as we can. The night passed — a dreadful night for her — the morning came — noon came — one o'clock came — Smith came — and, let it suffice, before two o'clock came, he was made certain of his happiness; — three came, and with it the carriage. The Exhibition question was put to the respectable suitor, who thought it wisest to make no alteration in the arrangement. In fact, the matured lover was considerably exhausted by the strength of his feelings, and considered it wiser to separate himself from his affianced bride until dinner-time, — *soit fait comme il est désiré* — the respectable Corydon retired to his house till seven o'clock, to ruminate on his approaching happiness, while the contented mother, and the bewildered daughter, fulfilled their engagement with their friend, and proceeded to Somerset House.

It may strike the reader (more especially if the reader be a female), as something strange and unfeminine, that Harriet should have consented to this visit to the Exhibition; but it must be remembered, that Mr. Smith had

not only voluntarily but anxiously suggested a respite, and, that any expression of anxiety on the part of Miss Franklin to remain at home, would have been construed into a hope and wish of seeing Charles Saville, in order to explain the circumstances which had led to her acceptance of his rival, or, perhaps, to make such arrangements as might most effectually frustrate the completion of the contract. It was thus, and under these circumstances, that the poor agitated girl was hurried away from the most important "scene" of her life, to a display, which, as illustrative of the freaks of nature, fell far short in interest of that which she had been engaged to visit the day before in the society of her dear Charles.

Forced thus unnaturally into a crowd, at a moment when solitude would best have suited the temper of her mind, Miss Franklin, with her mother and her friend, began to mount the extremely inconvenient, wretchedly dark, filthy, dirty, and eminently disagreeable staircase of the Royal Academy, slipping over scattered orange-peels, covering their gloves with dust, if accidentally touching any part of the balusters or walls, during the horrid ascent, the abominations of which are scarcely recompensed by the entertaining absurdity of beholding Hercules with his apples in a brass wire bird-cage, at the bottom of it.

Up they went, poor wearied travellers — Bunyan's pilgrim was happy by comparison; they passed that "Slough of Despond," the apartment stored with the mad fancies of juvenile modellers, or doting architects, quitted that "Valley of Humiliation," the chamber of monsters and miniatures, which adjoins it, and boldly and resolutely mounted the "Hill of Lucre," the great room, "top of all," where the wealth of thousands hangs round the walls, scattered at their pleasure, and converted into ugly faces, and ungainly figures, for the peculiar gratification and satisfaction of themselves and friends.

Just about the period that the party had reached the enviable summit, and were beginning to examine the pictures, — No. 1., "Portrait of a Gentleman," which could not be like, as representing that character, be the man whom he might, — No. 2. "Innocent Pastime," a chubby child,

playing with a pig — what does the reader imagine was happening below in the street, the Strand? why, there passing to or from chambers, (the which mattereth little,) went or came Mr. Charles Saville, who, with his eyes constantly wandering in search of the well-known livery of the Franklins, was most suddenly attracted by its appearance casing the body of her favourite footman, just preparing to take up his seat on the bench under the entrance to Somerset House. An inquiry, scarcely necessary under the circumstances, "whether the ladies were there," was answered in the affirmative; and in one minute after, having purchased his dark blue passport at one barrier, and deposited it at the other, Charles Saville was to be seen labouring on the tread-mill which his fair friends had just conquered and quitted.

It was only for him to reach the summit and enter the room, to see Harriet. What were the glazed and glaring gorgons which were on all sides suspended, to him, where lived and breathed the one sole hope of his heart, the idol of his adoration! In an instant he discovered her; the pleasing viridity (as the poet would have it) of her mother's pomona pelisse indicated that lady's presence, and with them was a stranger. What then! it was a female; and emboldened by this conviction, he squeezed, and pushed, and elbowed his way, till he reached the trio, who were, at the moment, deeply engaged in poring over the minute beauties of a gem of Wilkie's.

The toil of the squirrel in his cage is one of the most provoking examples of "labour in vain," that can be well imagined; but perhaps the very most provoking that has ever fallen under the reader's notice, was this feat of Charles Saville's. He encountered climbing, and a crowd, and dust, and difficulty, and having reached the *ultima Thule* of his hopes, was received by Mrs. Franklin with a look which seemed to say — only that ladies never swear, even with their eyes — What the devil brought *you* here? "Oh! Mr. Saville," said the mother; the sound caught the daughter's ears — mother, daughter, and Saville, all shook hands — to be sure — why not? the daughter's shaking, however, was not local — she trembled from head to foot

"What on earth brought *you* here?" said Mrs. Franklin to Saville.

'You, Mrs. Franklin," said Saville.

"Me! come——"

"I saw the carriage at the door, and found you were up stairs," said Charles; "so of course I flew to attend you."

Mrs. Franklin smiled and tossed her head, but Harriet kept her face close to the pictures, and the catalogue clasped in her hand. Mrs. Thompson, who was boringly fond of portraits, and liked to see "Lord Whiskin in the uniform of the North Somerset Militia," and "Lady Mary Fopsey, and child," in order that she might find them out, when she next saw them at the Opera, (for the Franklins were quite of *that* school,) kept the maternal fair one in constant exercise in looking up, and hunting down the pictures in the catalogue.

About *her*, Charles did not very much trouble himself, but it was clear to him that something very strange, something very decisive, had happened with regard to Harriet. He saw that her eyes were fixed upon the pictures, but that she looked not at them; the evident indifference, not to say distaste, with which she seemed to glance over the beauties of our first artists, the clearness of Calcott, the simplicity of Collins, the magic attractions of Wilkie, and the incomprehensible brilliancy of Turner, satisfied him that his suspicions were well founded; and he determined to take the only advantage a crowded room affords, (except indeed to pickpockets,) to ascertain, if possible, the grounds of the extraordinary change of conduct in both ladies, from warm to cold, and to discover what external influence had been used upon their mercurial dispositions, which in so very short a period of time as had passed since his last interview, could have suddenly tumbled their mental thermometers from blood heat to several degrees below freezing.

The opportunity Charles sought soon arrived, as opportunities inevitably will, if a man has but a little patence; and while Mrs. Franklin, jammed in amidst a bustling ring of half-a-dozen plump-looking misses, and as many

male plebeians as were necessary to constitute a small mob, was endeavouring to elucidate to Mrs. Thompson some of the more delicate touches of a "pretty bit," (perfectly satisfied in his own mind, that a man and woman who were most unceremoniously riding her as she stooped to descant upon the picture, were the two persons about whom she was most anxious,) Saville hastily inquired of Harriet in an under tone, "what on earth was the matter?"

"For Heaven's sake" whispered the lovely girl, "don't speak so loud," pointing most assiduously to a number in the catalogue, as if she were in the highest degree interested about it.

"Have I offended you?" said Charles.

"Oh, no — no," said Harriet.

"Tell me, then——"

"Some other time—pray don't—not now——"

"To-morrow?"

"Perhaps," said Harriet, her lips quivering, "we may not see you to-morrow."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Saville — "tell me — tell me——"

"Oh, nothing—nothing," answered she, moving one step nearer her mother, who was still absorbed in the pictures. Saville took her hand, which she gently withdrew; *he*, like an ardent lover, forgetting every thing but his devotion; she, like a well-bred girl, remembering where they were—what a tight-rope life it was they led—"The truth is," said Harriet—"I——"

"My dear Harriet, are you *there?*" said Mrs. Franklin; "I thought you and Mr. Saville were behind us."

"No," said Saville, affecting jocularity; "here we are, quite safe."

Harriet was confused—not by the interruption of her mother, but by the indiscretion of her late lover.

"By Jove, that's capital!" said one man just behind them to another next him, and who had been watching the whole of the little scene in progress between Charles and his beloved, to whose eyes and thoughts during its perform-

ance, the whole world had been lost, not excepting Mrs. Franklin herself.

The old — a thousand pardons — the elder lady, who had perhaps afforded the young people an opportunity for a moment's conversation, in order that Harriet might give Charles's hopes the *coup de grace,* by telling him the real state of the case, now became particularly anxious to get away, and taking her daughter under her arm — a most extraordinary and significant precaution — she hurried the dear interesting, near-sighted Mrs. Thompson along the room and down the stairs, with a rapidity which quite surprised and disconcerted the connoisseur, who had looked forward to a long day of it.

They reached the sculpture-room, but even that could not stay Mrs. Franklin's flight; she looked at her watch and declared it impossible; and thus simultaneously fidgeting onwards and downwards, they found the carriage in readiness — Mrs. Thompson stepped in first — then Harriet — then mamma.

"Good-day," said Mrs. Franklin to Saville.

"Good-bye," said Harriet.

"What do you do, this evening, Mrs. Franklin?" said Saville.

"We are engaged," replied she.

"Shall I see you to-morrow?"

"To-morrow we shall be busy all day," said Mrs. Franklin,

Busy! thought Saville, about what, I wonder; and he cast his eyes toward Harriet — *her* eyes met *his* — eyes *will* meet sometimes — she looked as if she wished to know whether he believed her mother's story: a sudden return of those eyes to the downcast direction in which they were before placed, served to render him somewhat sceptical. However, Mrs. Franklin *had said* they were to be engaged, and it was not for him to express a doubt about it. If she had called over her own staircase that she was "not at home," as he was ascending it, he must of course have believed the statement. So, finding the parley cease, he removed his white-gloved hand from the sill of the car-

riage window, and made way for the servant to take his mistress's orders; saying, as usual, "Good-bye."

"Good morning," again said Mrs. Franklin; Mrs. Thompson said nothing—nor did Harriet speak—but she bowed her head slowly, and fixing her eyes expressively for a moment on Saville, seemed to bid him farewell for ever — perhaps she did.

CHAPTER III.

The character of Harriet's parting look must have been strongly marked, for when the carriage drove off, something struck Charles Saville that he had seen and separated from her for the last time. But then, lovers are easily agitated, and no cameleon in the world borrows colours from surrounding objects so readily as the fancy of one,

——— "who dotes, yet doubts,
Suspects, yet fondly loves."

As he walked along — a somewhat unromantic street for a sighing swain — the Strand, he revolved in his mind a thousand different subjects, in order, if possible, to hit upon the particular circumstance or event, which had so decidedly changed the manner of both mother and daughter within four-and-twenty hours. At length he began to think, that perhaps the time had arrived, when Mrs. Franklin considered it proper that he should either come forward and make a declaration, or retire; and he reflected, that whatever reasons — and they were pretty cogent — he might have for suspecting and hoping that Harriet was favourably inclined towards him, he had never come to any sort of explanation with her; and that, after all, their unrestrained association — unrestrained, at least, till this very morning — might be merely the result of esteem for his character, or admiration of his talents and accomplishments. Yet, there was something ardent and soul-felt in their intercourse which he never saw displayed in her conversation with others; at all events, the dif-

ference between the earnestness of her manner towards *him*, and her indifference towards every body else, seemed fully to justify his opening his heart to her; but then he had in the world but four hundred pounds a year; and was not within three years of being called into the exercise of a profession, in which twenty more might be laboriously passed, before he should in any great degree increase his income. But his thoughts were full of hope, which "springs eternal in the human breast," and always holds out flattering prospects to sanguine lovers; and his heart was full of love, who, being blind, never troubles his silly head about any prospects whatever.

It appeared to Saville, at all events, nothing more than reasonable that he should make one struggle for the sole object of his life, and although nothing, that he knew of, had actually happened to awaken his fears, or endanger his security, still the very apprehension of losing her, perhaps by his own lukewarmness or want of zeal, set his brain in a whirl; and when he recollected the implied doubt conveyed by the lovely girl herself of their ever meeting again, threw him into a perfect agony of desperation.

His first impulse was to set off directly for Harley Street, and throw himself and his four hundred pounds per annum at the dear girl's feet; and since he knew enough of the family affairs — although, in fact, he knew very little about them — to know that her fortune was of a very elastic character, and depended entirely upon the will and pleasure of her mother as to its eventual extension or contraction, he thought at all events that no interested motives could be attributed to his declaration; and that if Harriet felt but a twentieth part of the affection for *him* which he entertained towards *her*, she would not hesitate to realise those scenes of rural felicity of which they had so often talked, and locating herself in some blest retreat of health and peace, bid adieu to all the follies of "the flaunting town," and settle herself with her loving spouse in a sequestered cottage, until the much wished-for period should arrive, when their means might afford them a better, yet perhaps not happier residence.

How to make his proposal? That was the next question. It seemed most likely, that as Mrs. Franklin and her daughter had informed him that they were to be busy the whole of the next day, he might not be admitted if he called upon them; indeed the announcement of their occupation seemed to him a sort of forewarning not to come till the following day. He satisfied himself upon this point the more easily, because it would give him an additional twenty-four hours for deliberation, although before the first six had elapsed, he had resolved to convey his sentiments, his hopes, and wishes, to Harriet in a letter. He should then be sure that his tale would be told, without any danger of interruption from her mother's numerous morning visitors, who were perpetually dropping in and popping out; nay, without any fear of interruption from the mother herself: and thus, whatever Harriet's feelings might really be, she would not have the power of checking him in the outset of his declaration, or nipping it in the bud with a rigid frown or a freezing look. The moment she had broken the seal, he was perfectly sure that she would go through the whole letter; for, even if her offended delicacy should prompt her to return the epistle, he felt certain that her excited curiosity would induce her to read every line of it first.

For the purpose of arranging the affair, and concocting this interesting address, Charles absented himself from society for the day, and having dined hastily and alone, devoted the whole evening, manifestly to the prejudice of his professional advancement, to the preparation of his appeal to the feelings of his beloved Harriet. He proceeded to make an ardent and unequivocal declaration of his devoted attachment, and unalterable esteem and affection, dwelling at the same time with becoming diffidence upon the unsatisfactory state of his own prospects in life, and attributing to the narrowness of his circumstances the tardiness of the avowal which he thus ventured to make, but which, until the present moment, he had not felt sufficiently bold even to whisper.

The intervening day between writing and despatching

this most important missive, gave him full and frequent opportunities of revising and correcting it, and he

> "——— perusing the epistle
> Believ'd he had brought her to his whistle,
> And read it like a jocund lover,
> With great applause to himself twice over,"

at least; and after the second perusal, having turned it and shaped it exactly to what he considered the standard of perfect letter-writing, put it carefully by, so that it might be despatched early on the following morning, which in due time it was, and left at the door of his Dulcinea's house in Harley Street, so, as he flattered himself, to catch her just at the very moment she was quitting her dressing-room to descend to breakfast.

Those only who have been similarly circumstanced — and, thanks to the generous feelings and social impulses of our nature, few there are who have not — can duly appreciate the anxiety in which the whole of that morning was passed. Dinner time came and went — the dusk of evening and the shades of night covered the face of the earth; no answer — that was painful — but the letter had not been returned — that was cheering; — every now and then the door of his room opened, and his servant entered; his heart fluttered — he looked up through the dimness of the distance — at one time the man brought a bill — at another a billet — now a three-cornered note — now a square card "to remind;" and from each of these intrusions arose a separate and distinct disappointment. He would not leave home lest the answer should come — he could not bear to stay at home lest it should not; and thus hoping and fearing, expecting and wishing, he lingered out a long and dismal evening; and at last found relief from his anxiety by reading a very highly praised work of the day, which, luckily, secured him, what laudanum had denied, and at half-past twelve he retired to rest, with a hope of sleeping which he had not previously entertained.

Short, however, and troubled, were his fitful slumbers; the little repose he got served only to give reality to a series of horrid dreams, the heroine of every one of them being, of course, Miss Harriet Franklin. Sometimes he beheld her with a full-grown pair of well-fledged pinions,

like one of Moore's angels, winging her way to the skies, and beckoning him to follow. Then he saw her like St. Pierre's Virginia, shipwrecked on a coral reef, and dashed amongst the billows; and fancying himself another Paul, half precipitated himself out of bed, in order to snatch her from danger and death. Then he beheld her, like another Andromeda, chained to the entrance of a cavern, in which her exemplary parent sat snarling in the shape of a green, scaly-tailed dragon, attended by the white-haired viscount, and the red-haired baronet, as attendant devilkins of an inferior class, with hoofs, horns, talons, and tails; fired at the sight, poor Charles, like Perseus, tried to destroy the threatening monster, but again awoke, conscious of no result, except that of having overthrown the candlestick, which stood on a table by the bed-side.

More horrible visions were never procured by Fuseli himself under his raw-pork regimen. He could not again settle himself — he listened — looked — day never was so long in breaking — clocks never were so slow in striking — yet, after tossing and tumbling, not in the least degree after the fashion of Gay's Polly, the morning dawned; the sun began to shed its influence through the curtains of his chamber window, and very shortly after, that is to say, about the time when sober men are retiring to their homes and families, from Crockford's, and well-regulated ladies are announcing to their daughters that "*this* must be the last quadrille," he started from his sleepless bed, and hastily dressing himself, left his lodging in Charles Street, to breathe the yet unsmoked, unheated atmosphere of one of the finest mornings that ever beamed from the heavens.

Unconscious whither he strolled, and careless where, instinct, our second nature, led him to direct his steps to the rural regions of Harley Street. His walk was for health — the fresh air of that northern district suited the "present temper of his mind;" and there he could see the casket that contained his jewel, and watch the window within the which slept Harriet. He reached the accustomed street. It was just at the period of the day when the sun condescends to gild the chimney-tops on one of its lengthened sides, that the lover arrived: all was calm and serene —

there was the dwelling — there the window — his east — his sun — the daughter of Mrs. Franklin was there — the shutters were closed — no sign of life about the house.

Ah! thought he, there she slumbers — my loved letter, perhaps, beneath her pillow — perhaps even yet waking, and repeating to herself every word it contains; I *shall* have an answer by-and-bye; she will yet be kind, and I shall still be blest; all which rhapsodical suppositions and expectations merely going to prove, as the reader already knows, how prodigiously mistaken the wisest amongst us may sometimes be.

In matters of love, Charles Saville was, to say truth, wise enough; at least, wise enough to make a tolerable fair estimate of a young lady's feelings by her looks; and as he himself said, when summing up the pros and cons, as regarded the despatch of his formal proposal, he felt conscious that when he approached her, the sparkling animation which lighted up her handsome and expressive countenance, was infinitely more brilliant than any produced by similar addresses from any other persons with whom she associated. There was a provoking downcast look of cold and distant diffidence which she *could* assume — or, perhaps, it would be more just to say, which she could not conceal, from those in whom she felt no interest; a resolute envelopement of her bright eyes in the silken shade of their long lashes, which, to a stranger, was positively repulsive; but which to those who, like Charles, were accustomed to bask in the sunshine of the brilliant orbs, and revel in all the intellectual blaze of her mind, was almost comical; but all her little arts were untinctured by coquetry, and this very display of preference was the result of ingenuousness, warm-heartedness, and candour; and yet — there was no letter sent to Saville.

Two days had elapsed — his patience worn to a thread — himself proportionably attenuated — his breakfast again over — no letter — one o'clock, ditto — two, ditto. It ceased to be endurable — the delay was torture — he had suffered the *peine forte* quite long enough; the certainty of wretchedness was preferable to the agony of suspense. At three he determined upon his course of action, and pro-

ceeded with new resolution in his mind, and fresh courage in his heart, once more to Harley Street. He reached the interesting spot; when,—who shall describe his horror at finding the whole of the windows closed! What could it be?—had death been at work! He started back — was it possible! In a few fleeting hours —however slow to him—some dreadful event had occurred. Harriet was dead—dead, perhaps, for love of *him*. His letter had never been delivered, and she, in despair at his apparent neglect, had swallowed poison! Perhaps Mrs. Franklin had been summoned hastily from the world! What other perhaps? Another moment could not be lost, and flying rather than running across the street, he vaulted up the steps, and gave a gentle rap with the knocker, ringing the bell at the same time with a corresponding delicacy.

This double appeal was replied to by the appearance in the area below, of an elderly and somewhat portly personage, habited in a blue cotton gown illuminated with black dots; and wearing a cap of no inconsiderable dimensions, decorated with a bow of dirtyish blue riband; her shoes were down at heel, and she held a broom in her hand; and lifting up a face, broad, but by no means beautiful she inquired in a shrill tone, "What the gentleman pleased to want?"

As much astounded by this appeal from below, as Denmark's Prince was at the groan of old Truepenny (as his highness most respectfully calls his lamented sire), "in the cellarage," Charles Saville, not considering it specially directed to himself, repeated the operation of knocking at the door, when a repetition of the demand ascended in a more shrilly tone, and with an emphasis which clearly proved, that if the knocking visiter did not condescend to hold parlance with the inquirer below, he was not likely to obtain a satisfactory answer to his questions.

"Is Mrs. Franklin at home?" said the half angry and quite indignant Saville.

"No, sir," said the woman—she's left."

Left! What, thought Saville, does she mean by left?—"Have the goodness," said he, "to step up for a moment"

"In a minute, sir," said the woman; and shortly after he heard her unlocking and unbolting the street door, an operation not, however, very rapidly performed, but which, when concluded, presented to his view the well known hall of his Harriet's home.

"Have you got a ticket, sir?" said the woman.

"A ticket for what?" said Charles.

"To view the premises," was the reply.

"I don't want to view the premises—where are Mrs. Franklin and her family?"

"They went from here early yesterday morning, sir," said the female.

"Gone!—Where are they gone to?"

"I can't exactly say, sir—into the country, I believe."

"When do they return?"

"Not at all as I knows of," said Mrs. Richards; such was the individual's name.

"I think you *do* know," said Saville, just entering the hall; "come, recollect."

"Upon my word I don't," answered she.

Saville knew the power of gold, and although he had never yet personally experienced the delight of seeing a certain number of *guas.* marked on a brief of his own, he felt convinced that a fee could not be misinterpreted into a bribe; and accordingly slipped the four hundredth part of his annual income, into the hard and furrowed palm of his newly-made friend and informant.

"Here," said he, "take this"—she did,—"I am sure that something strange must have happened, to send Mrs. Franklin off in so great a hurry; but that I care little about: you can tell me all I wish to know—where is Miss Harriet?"

Mrs. Richards appeared all at once staggered—whether by the sight of the sovereign, or by some new light which had broken in upon her, it is impossible to decide; but the whole expression of her countenance changed in an instant when she heard Saville's question.

"Why do you want to know?" said she.

"No matter why—do you know me?"

"No," replied Mrs. Richards, "I can't say as I does."

"You have not been here long then?"

"No," said Mrs. Richards; "nor must I let you stay here long, or I shall get my head in my hand, as the saying is. You are the gentleman, I suppose, as has been a hankering after Miss Harriet for some time past—I've heard of it."

"Hush, hush!" said Saville, dreading the notoriety of his attachment, which equally surprised and alarmed him, and

"Trembling at the noise himself had made."

"I see you understand what I mean. Is Miss Harrie gone out of town?"

"Not a bit of it," said Mrs. Richards, "that's all a fudge, a catfaddle of my old missuss's—but I'll tell you plainly, there has been a regular quandary, as I call it, about you."

"Well, well, never mind *that*," said Charles, "don't enter into particulars now: where is your young mistress?"

"Mind what you are about," said Mrs. Richards; "she is gone to stay in Carburton-street, Fitzroy-square."

"Carburton-street," repeated Saville, "what an odd place! What has taken her there?"

"She was here this morning," said Mrs. Richards, "and I *do* believe somehow expected as you would call."

Confound it! thought Saville, so then, after all, I have lost her by my own neglect. Thank Heaven she is alive, and yet within my reach. "Why," said he, to Mrs. Richards, "did she leave this—or why quit her mother?"

"Because missus was in an unmerciful passion, and forced her to go on a visit to her aunt Dowbiggin," said Mrs. Richards.

Saville had never heard Mrs. Franklin mention this relation, but considering the lady's name and her place of abode, that did not so very much surprise him—"And where *is* your old mistress?"

"Gone to Margate," said Mrs. Richards, "about some business or other relating to Miss."

Margate was a strange place for a lady of Mrs. Franklin's pride and pretension to visit, but a faint recollection passed through Charles's mind of having heard that the red-headed

baronet had taken a house at Broadstairs; and "putting that and that together," he immediately conjured up some new conspiracy against his happiness, which rendered it more than ever important for him to steal an interview with his beloved, and if things came to the worst, to "steal her" herself from her arbitrary mother. Indeed, to the suggestion of an interview with the lovely girl, he was more particularly induced, because he flattered himself that Harriet's evasion of the journey to Margate was a contrivance of her's, in order to bring about such an event; and this view of the case was considerably strengthened by the fact of her having visited the house in her mother's absence, in the hope, as his venerable communicant had more than hinted, of meeting him, when he should make what she evidently considered his expected call, about their luncheon-time. How exciting! how encouraging! how emboldening!

"Would you," said Charles, "would you, Ma'am," slipping another sovereign into her half-open hand—"would you undertake to convey a note for me to your young lady? it shall be a very small note and very short."

"Why," said Mrs. Richards, "I do think, sir, it is a shame to keep fond hearts apart, for as the song says, what is gold compared with love?" at the same moment, dropping the second sovereign into her long dark pocket, to mingle and jingle with its already deposited brother coin, a brass thimble, a lump of bees-wax, seven halfpence, the key of her trunk, and a much-used once red leather housewife.

"Will you then?"

"Trust me," said the veteran; "I shall go from this about eight on some errands—bring your letter to me before that, and it shall go as sure as the post."

Amiable dragon, thought Saville. "I will bring my letter here then."

"Yes, do, sir," said the old body; "but don't make it up like a letter—double it up square, and I can give it Miss Harriet myself, as if it was some parcel left; and, above all, don't direct it, so that if anything should be found out, nobody can fix it a-top of nobody."

Excellent contrivance, thought Saville. "I will be back again shortly," said he, "I feel I may trust in you—so you may confide in me."

So saying, the ardent lover bounded away, and hurrying himself down to the extensive Oriental caravansara in Vere-street, known as Ibbotson's Hotel, which he selected as the nearest convenient spot for such a purpose, he wrote the following lines hastily, and in such a state of trepidation, that even the waiters wondered at his emotion, and warned each other to keep a sharp look-out on the spoons and salt-cellars belonging to the Coffee-room.

"You will perhaps blame my intemperance, and be angry with my presumption, but I cannot resist making this one appeal. The sudden departure of your mother for Margate, your equally sudden removal from home, at first reduced me to despair; but I found you were not gone — that you were even to-day in Harley-street — how provoking to have missed you.

"I have never been introduced to your aunt, nor do I recollect having heard you mention her name; but as you are with her, there can be no earthly impropriety in my calling, nor in your admitting me, while under her care and tutelage.

"I know you will be angry with me for writing; but recollect our position: circumstanced as we are, some allowance may surely be made. I have taken advantage of the good old soul in Harley-street, to convey this to you; the same medium will bring me an answer.

"Yours always affectionately

"CHARLES SAVILLE."

This dispatch, so speedily scrawled, and so incautiously signed, was nevertheless most carefully folded according to the suggestion of the venerable spider-brusher, and in a very short space of time delivered into her special care, and by her received with the most ardent promises of entire zeal and perfect secrecy, and moreover a certainty, at least, as far as *her* ideas of things in general went, of an answer the next day. It was clear that the old creature wished well to her amiable and kind-hearted young mistress, but she became

flurried, and actually trembled with the alarm of responsibility; and when a large elderly female falls into a state of flusteration, it is not in a minute that she can be calmed. Like a three-decker in a gale of wind, it is a long time before she begins to pitch and roll, but when she does, it takes an infinitely longer time to get her steady again. Whether Mrs. Richards felt that Charles might be disposed to heal the wound which her present conduct in his behalf seemed to make in her conscience by a fresh application of gold-beater's skin, or whether, like much more important official old women in blue ribands, she began to tremble at the responsibility she felt she had incurred, it is not for me even to guess; but certain it is, that her agitation prevented Charles from making any of the inquiries he had intended with regard to the disposition of the establishment, and sundry other little matters in which he was most deeply interested: however, amply satisfied with the progress he had already made, he once more left his ancient go-between, under a promise to "call again tomorrow" for his answer.

How different were the feelings by which he was animated to-day, from those which had for the two preceding ones depressed him almost to despair. He visited chambers, little in the mind, it is true, to drudge through deeds, or pore over precedents, but still with a heart firm of purpose, and an assurance that if he were once possessed of his Harriet, she, herself, would be the most powerful stimulus to exertion; and at the moment abandoning all his former plans of a cottage, a cow, and comfort in the country, he felt himself with an ascending power, rising over the heads and wigs of his more erudite and learned brethren, to the highest pinnacle of preferment and pre-eminence. He went to his club — it was not of the first class, but very convenient — and there, having fallen in with one or two of those free and easy good-natured creatures who fancy their society always agreeable, joined them, because they would not permit him to enjoy one of the great luxuries of such communities — a quiet dinner in a corner; for who goes to clubs to dine? men go there when they have nothing else to do, to "take their feed"

and have done with it — and there, accordingly, he stayed in the highest possible spirits, until it was quite time he should retire to rest, in order to be ready for the events of the following day.

How differently was this night passed from that, the dreams of which have already been recorded. At once lulled and excited by the copious libations which he had poured, he fancied, as he slept, that his dear friend Mrs. Franklin was transformed into a Margate steam-packet, with a chimney, paddles, and a safety-valve ; while Harriet appeared to him as the genius of Britain, chipping his name upon a chalky cliff with a silver chisel. Butterflies, sylphs, bunches of roses, showers of gold, spice-trees all in full bearing, and honeysuckle bowers in full bloom, danced before his eyes ; and in the midst of all this tumultuous, confused happiness, the ardent and enthusiastic lover slept until ten o'clock the following morning.

CHAPTER IV.

Punctuality in love is neglect — to avoid the imputation of which, our anxious hero was at his post in Harley-street while yet the dial of Vere-street chapel was announcing it to be half-past eleven o'clock ; and as if a certain sympathy had operated upon the feelings of the venerable duenna, he beheld her peeping and peering from the well-known door, just as he caught a distant glimpse of it. The much-wished-for port in view, he crowded sail, and speedily reached his object ; and much to his satisfaction, and not a little to his surprise, received from her withered hands the answer of his Love : such, however, was the old body's alarm and trepidation, that she would not allow him to stop in the house to look at a line of it, and it was not until he reached the square, that he was able to burst open the seal, and read as follows : —

" You are a shabby fellow — however, never mind — we will settle that another time. I might have been carried off

against my will, for all you have done to prevent it — never mind. My aunt's temper has grown unbearable, she is a perfect *divil;* don't come here upon any account. I will be walking down the sunny side of Portland-place to-day at two; if you happen to be there, we may meet.

"Yours truly,

"HARRIET."

This note, directed and secretly delivered to Saville; the language so extraordinary; the hand so well disguised; the point of assignation so well selected; Portland-place! the only street in London or its suburbs, in which ladies may walk unattended by a servant; so much tact displayed, and so much more energy and decision than he had anticipated in his tender, gentle Harriet, — could he believe his eyes, his senses! What wonderful creatures women are, thought he; to fancy that a girl all reserve, all diffidence, all shrinking modesty, when in the presence of those who might be supposed to have a controul over her, the moment she is released from restraint, should give the rein to her feelings, and commit to paper the outpourings of her heart and mind, in language the most unequivocal, not to say the most extraordinary. To be sure, the word descriptive of her respected parent's prototype, was spelled *divil,* with an *i* instead of an *e* — a circumstance which makes a considerable difference in the strength of the expression. But it cannot be denied, that his surprise and pleasure at the frankness and readiness with which she met his views were mingled with something very like disappointment and regret at the sudden abandonment of her general rule of conduct. But those feelings speedily gave place to another, which, if not quite so well or reasonably founded, was, at least, infinitely more consoling and gratifying. He could not help admitting that her precipitancy of action, and freedom of expression, bordered very closely upon something extremely like indecorum; but having placed it all to the account of the strength and power of her affection for himself, he very shortly became reconciled to this natural extravagance, and set down the whole proceeding as one of remarkable energy and peculiar independence of character.

Of one thing there could be no doubt; namely, that he should be at his post at the appointed hour. He made his arrangements accordingly, and turned the corner of Langham-place exactly as the clock of that beautiful and senselessly censured church was striking the hour of two. It was a remarkably fine day; the broad pavement of Portland-place was thickly studded with belles of all ages, sizes, professions, characters, and descriptions; their figures, various as their avocations, were beautifully developed by the influence of a brisk southerly breeze, from which they endeavoured, or seemed to endeavour, to protect themselves, by divers and sundry evolutions and devices highly illustrative of female ingenuity, and which, if they failed of their implied purpose, afforded the more sheltered spectator the opportunity of witnessing the multiplicity and diversity of attitude into which it is possible to throw the human form.

The feelings of our hero, whose delicacy in regard to the conduct of females was proportionate to his admiration of their charms and virtues, had scarcely recovered their tone, or rallied from the shock which they had received, from the something so terribly like an assignation which Harriet's note contained; and it is curious enough, but not more strange than true, that although dying to see her, he almost hoped she might not be there, and that he had misconstrued the real meaning of what, it must be confessed, appeared a "palpable *hint*" on the part of the young lady.

Full of nervous apprehension, sickening anxiety, and the mingled expectation and dread of finding his hitherto timid and retiring Miss Franklin, wending, or rather *winding* her way down the Eolian parade, Saville proceeded on his tour of inspection. He walked and gazed, and gazed and walked—but no Harriet did he see. Many a favourable glance was shot from the bright eyes of sundry single damsels, who, from their manner and the expression of their countenances, appeared to be upon something of the same errand as himself, looking for companions; but to him, the beloved of whose heart is far away, weak and impotent is the artillery of other eyes, and he shrank from the bright weapons by which he was assailed, and turned to

seek the sweet and mild expression of that countenance which was all the world to him.

Missing an appointment, or being discomfited in one, is extremely disagreeable, more especially when the *venue* is laid in some extremely well frequented spot. The constant walk to the top of the street, and the equally constant return to the bottom of it, in time attract the eyes of the groups who are taking healthful exercise without a grain of sentiment in their souls; and after four or five *rencontres*, they find it difficult to restrain (that is, if they have even the charity and consideration to try to conceal) the amusement which they feel at the disappointment of the wandering and forgotten walker, until at length their barbarity drives him entirely away, almost more angry than disappointed at the frustration of his scheme.

Saville had been polishing the purbecks of Portland-place until the clock, which had stricken two when he arrived, had sounded four. Harriet, the punctual, the well-regulated Harriet—his very encomiums sounded like watch-work—to have so overstaid her time, if she meant that he should come—or perhaps forgotten or neglected it altogether—it was passing strange. Indeed, as he was conscious, from the steps which had been taken, and the movements at head-quarters, that matters did not look favourably for him, he began to apprehend that his darling Harriet had gotten involved in some difficulty, or entangled in some embarrassment with her aunt Dowbiggin on his account, and that Mrs. Franklin had taken some measures unknown to her daughter, in order effectually to prevent any intercourse between her and himself.

All surmises were vain, all delays dangerous; Harriet did not appear, and Saville resolved upon another trip to Harley-street, and another letter to the young lady. Prudence, however, which seldom interferes with the pursuits of gentlemen suffering under Saville's complaint, so far checked him in his preceedings, as to suggest that as the old servant had exhibited strong marks of repugnance and disinclination to continue the office of forwarding letters, he had better send Harriet a verbal message, *to say* that he had kept the appointment she had proposed, and regretted to find her not equally punctual.

This he considered a masterly bit of policy. It lessened the danger of discovery; it diminished the weight of responsibility; and although he did not carry on his *affaire de cœur* upon the prudential system of "never writing a letter and never destroying one," he had fancied Harriet's aunt into so formidable an enemy, that he congratulated himself upon any contrivance which was likely to keep him out of the range of her malice.

He accordingly saw and confided to the old woman in Harley-street the announcement of his obedience to the commands, or rather the suggestions of his beloved, and of his unsuccessful saunter at the appointed place; but the satisfaction which was afforded him by the readiness of his venerable messenger to be the bearer of this little history was somewhat weakened by an explanation which she thought proper to give touching the real cause of the watchfulness of Miss Harriet's aunt, and the consequent difficulty of keeping open a literary correspondence.

"I believe, sir," said Mrs. Richards, "that something happened at the last Epsom races, — what I don't exactly know, but so we in the house hear, — about some soldier officer, which makes Mrs. Dowbiggin keep a sharp look-out after him and her; and I know sometimes, lately, when she has been talking about you, Mrs. D. has snubbed her, and bid her give up all such stuff, and turn her thoughts to marrying as her ma wishes her.

"What!" said Saville, wondering how a person in the condition of Mrs. Richards could be so well informed in the secrets of the family, "she meant Mr. Smith, I suppose?"

"To be sure she did," said the woman; "because, you know, it's a great catch for miss, all things considered; howsumdever I am quite sure she'll be fit to break her heart to think of not meeting you. I am certain she meant to go, because just afore I came from her aunt's she was getting a bit of cold beefsteak pie and some pickled inions, and scarcely gave herself time to swallow a pint o' porter, so that she might get to Portland-place in time."

"Onions and porter!" exclaimed Saville; "my good woman, what are you talking about?"

"Oh, sir," replied she, "you mus'n't fancy that young

ladies are always the prim stuck-up things they seem afore company, when they turn their eyes up at this thing, and throw them down at the other thing, and look as if butter would not melt in their mouths;. Miss Harriet's as good as another at her knife and fork; and as for a wee drappie ——"

"You are mad!" interrupted Saville, "raving mad."

"La, no, sir," said Mrs. Richards; "after that affair with Lieutenant O'Rotherham, poor Miss Harriet took on, and was as peeking as peeking, and eat nothing for a whole fortnight; I'am sure we were all glad enough to see her take to it again."

"Lieutenant O'Rotherham!" muttered Saville; "then there is an end of every thing in the world; death and destruction stare me in the face. This comes of rashly plunging into an attachment, and blindly devoting one's self to an object which, after all, proves unworthy! Harriet is depraved, — abandoned; and I am the dupe of her hypocrisy, — the victim of her duplicity!"

This was almost more than he could bear. Such a blow tells doubly; it wounds the *amour propre* of a man in two places; it stabs him to the heart to find that he has a favoured rival, and it cuts him to the quick to think that he has been deceived by *her* whom he thought so long devoted to him; his feelings and his pride are thus equally martyred, and his mind is full of anger, jealousy, and shame.

Saville, however, resolved upon pausing before he wholly abandoned himself to misery, and his once loved Harriet to the ignominy to which, it appeared at the moment, she had so justly subjected herself. The exaggerations of servants; their misconstructions and perversions of the simplest circumstances; the position of the family of this old woman; her evident ignorance upon many points of Mrs. Franklin's domestic arrangements, all weighed with him as so many reasons for receiving her hateful hints with caution. He was resolved to meet his death-blow, if he were doomed to suffer, from Harriet herself, — from herself to ascertain, if possible, the reasons for her extraordinary conduct, and learn from her own lips the motives of a double falsehood, which could lead her to

express a wish to meet and maintain her acquaintance with *him*, while, if her own messenger were to be trusted, she had in some way, not extremely intelligible, seriously committed herself in another quarter.

"Make my compliments," said Saville, all that has been written upon the subject of his doubts and fears having flashed through his mind in a couple of seconds — "make my compliments to your young mistress, and entreat her, if possible, to let me hear from her tomorrow; and however or wherever it may best be accomplished, fix some time and place where I may see her, if it be but for five minutes."

"La, sir," said the old woman; "she'll be sure to do that — bless your eyes, she's dying to see you. But don't stop now; come tomorrow, and you shall see her — perhaps here. You keep up your spirits: even if she *should* marry old Smith, to please her mother, she don't care the value of a brass farthing for him; but as I was a saying, don't you stop here now; come tomorrow about noon."

"I may rely?" said Saville.

"You may, sir," said Mrs. Richards, "you may be sure o' me; you are a gem'man, and behaves as sich, and you need not fear that I shall play you foul. So good day, sir; now go along, there's a good man."

Saying which she shut the door, and left Saville overcome by a combination of feelings which it would be difficult to describe. His opinions of women were the most exalted. Of all women he naturally fancied, being a lover, that Harriet Franklin was the perfection; and yet, from what had dropped from her retainer, it seemed as if the match with Smith had been hurried on to conceal, or rather patch up, some indiscretion of which she had been guilty. So! the eyes which had beamed with the sweet expression of affection upon him, had shone with equal warmth upon another; and the rosy lips over which had flowed the purest sentiments of friendship and esteem, had, perhaps, been pressed by a half-pay Irish lieutenant at Epsom races.

This seemed in some degree to account for the hawk-like activity with which Mrs. Franklin had pounced upon the matured millionaire in the sticking-plaster shorts. This

solved the mystery of placing her daughter under the charge, almost in the custody, of an aunt, unheard of in their happier days; and oh! what a pang did these reflections cost him! to lose the object of his devotion was surely enough, but to know that such a being as Harriet Franklin could have so committed herself was worse than death.

To death, indeed, it seems extremely probable that our much to be pitied young hero would very shortly have consigned himself, had he not been awakened from one of his horrid reveries in which he was indulging, as he almost unconsciously paced the pavement of Albermarle-street, on his way to his lodgings, by the astounding appearance of one of the tall, leggy footmen belonging to the establishment of Mrs. Franklin, whom he beheld dissipating his dignified leisure by sucking the gold head of his long cane at the door of a milliner's house, as he stood attentively watching two small boys playing marbles on the pavement.

Saville looked at the man, who saw him, and capped accordingly.

"With whom are you living now?" said Saville to the servant, struck with the similarity of the livery to that of his once much-esteemed friend, and thinking it rather odd that Isaac, — so was this two yards and a quarter of humanity called, — should have been so speedily enlisted into another service, and so very rapidly equipped.

"With missus, sir," said Isaac.

"What — Mrs. Franklin?" said Saville.

"Yes, sir," replied Isaac.

"When does she come back to town?" inquired Saville.

"She harn't left it yet," answered the footman.

"Not gone!" exclaimed the lover. "Where is she then?"

"In here, sir," said the man, "buying things."

"Where is your young mistress?"

"At her aunt's, sir," said Isaac.

A thought — a notion — an idea flashed into Saville's mind; — it was desperation, but what of that — violent diseases require violent remedies, — why not strike the blow, and risk an effort which should make or mar him at once. He resolved upon the instant; one more appeal to

Mrs. Franklin should be made; her departure seemed providentially delayed: should he? — Yes — the yeas had it.

Having screwed his courage to the sticking place, he accordingly knocked at the milliner's door. A sweet pretty girl, with melting blue eyes, mantling blushes, clustering curls, and a pinafore, opened it; she was dressed like a pattern doll, and might have served as a sign for her mistress's tireshop, and would at any other time have attracted somewhat more of Saville's attention than at this particular crisis he felt disposed to pay her. He hastily inquired for Mrs. Franklin, and the little portress, almost without consideration, admitted him. She was preceding him up stairs, when she suddenly hesitated, as if she had too readily granted the gentleman's request; but then recollecting the age and standing of Mrs. F., which to the eye and mind of a being in the hey-day of sixteen seemed infinitely more serious than they really were, she felt assured in the course she had adopted, and without much apparent repugnance, threw open the door of the front drawing-room, and in a moment the lover stood in the presence of the person he most dreaded upon earth.

If the trepidation of one of the performers in this scene was great, the surprise of the other even transcended it. Saville stammered, trembled, and endeavoured to explain how he had gotten there; Mrs. Franklin threw an expression of astonishment into her still handsome countenance, and the fair portress (whether wishing to spare both parties the pain of having a witness to their embarrassment, or because it was the custom of the establishment, it is quite impossible to say) no sooner saw that the lady and gentleman were known to each other, than she quitted the room and shut the door; a measure which, as Madame "Chose," the woman of the house, was gone hunting for *échantillons* for Mrs. Franklin's inspection, left them *tête-à-tête.*

"My dear Mr. Saville," said Mrs. Franklin, "why are you here? Of all things in the world it was my object to have spared you this. I hoped to have left London without our meeting, for I candidly admit I esteem you too

much to wish, or to be compelled to cause you needless pain or uneasiness."

"I entirely appreciate your kindness and consideration," said Saville, much relieved, yet somewhat overcome by the conciliatory tone in which he found himself addressed by his Harriet's mother.

"Your letter to Harriet, Mr. Saville," said Mrs. Franklin, "I honestly confess I did not deliver to her, nor does she even know now of your having sent it. When you are aware of my motives for this apparent neglect of your wishes, I trust you will approve of them. I did not intend to return it to you until I had actually left town, in order, as I have just said, to avoid an interview, which, without advantage to either of us, could not fail to be painful to both."

"Miss Franklin," said Saville, "is ——"

"At her aunt's," replied Mrs. Franklin; "where she will remain for a short time; indeed until I leave town."

"I had heard you were already gone," said Saville.

"I had intended to go earlier," replied the lady, "but poor Harriet's health is extremely delicate, and the flurry occasioned by the circumstances in which she is placed has quite upset her; so that although I had given up Harley-street, I could not let her leave me till the day before yesterday. She is but a weak plant, and requires great care; and the loss of appetite which I have observed in her during the last week has alarmed me considerably."

It was delightful to Saville to hear Harriet thus spoken of, as yet his friend at least, and one in whom they both had an interest; the loss of appetite he hoped might be only a maternal fancy; a hope considerably strengthened by the anecdote of the "beefsteak pie and pickled onions."

"Under the circumstances," continued Mrs. Franklin, who, apprehensive that she had suffered the conversation to take a turn which Saville might misconstrue into the 'favourable,'— "I thought, knowing as I could not fail to do, the subject of your letter to my child, and knowing her fate to be irrevocably fixed, it would have been barbarous to give her, what I felt convinced was a declaration of your sentiments, which, whether she ever felt a disposition to listen to them or not, would, at this juncture, have only

excited and agitated her, without any possible advantage to either of you."

"Is it then *quite* decided?" said Saville, tremblingly.

"Irrevocably settled," said Mrs. Franklin; "the *trousseau* is ready, and the day fixed."

"Is there no chance, then, of——"

"Not a hope," said Mrs. Franklin; "or rather, I should say, not a fear."

"And is Miss Franklin equally pleased with the match with yourself?" said Saville; "pardon my question; but next to enjoying happiness with her, to know that she herself is happy, will be some consolation."

"Indeed I believe so," said Mrs. Franklin.

"Are you quite sure?" said Saville, who grew energetic, in proportion to the calmness and readiness to listen which Mrs. Franklin evinced: — "Has there been no compulsion used to force her into this union? Be candid, my dear madam, with one whose fate seems linked with her's. Has not the affair of Lieutenant O'Rotherham — I see you start, — I am aware of the circumstances, — has not this business, which, after all, may be but a trifle, been urged upon her as a reason for consenting to a marriage with a man old enough to be her grandfather."

"Lieutenant who?" exclaimed Mrs. Franklin.

"O'Rotherham," replied Saville. "I mean the affair at Epsom races; the cause, as I am told, of your sending her to Mrs. Dowbiggin's for safety sake."

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Mrs. Franklin, jumping from her seat, and ringing the bell most violently — "has your sorrow taken so serious a turn as this? What shall I do — what will become of me — alone and——"

At this moment several alarmed virgins of the establishment rushed into the apartment.

"Save me!" continued the lady; "protect me — I had no idea of the effects of misplaced affection."

"Lor!" screamed the mistress of the house, who followed the vestals into the drawing-room, armed with a yard measure: "Vat, has he presume to be rude to madame?"

"Rude!" screamed the matron; "quite the contrary, ma'am; he's mad — mad as a March hare!"

"Indeed, Mrs. Franklin," said Saville, "I am as entirely in my senses as ever I was in my life."

"Send for a porter or two to get him out," muttered one of the misses to an assistant, who glided forth to procure a couple of chairmen from the corner of Stafford-street, in case of necessity.

"All I have said, or repeated," continued Saville, "I heard from a person who ought to know — Mrs. Richards."

"And who may Mrs. Richards be?" said Mrs. Franklin, who was standing in the centre of a circle of guardian nymphs: — "who are all the people of whom you have been talking? Really, Mr. Saville, you *must be* crazy."

"Mr. Saville!" screamed one of the girls; "Oh, where is Mr. Saville? — show him to me — show him to me!" saying which she fell nearly lifeless into the arms of a sister of the society.

At this most unexpected event, Saville was infinitely more surprised than any body else of the party. Mrs. Franklin began to think the insanity was infectious, and looked as if she expected to be bitten on the instant.

"Vat, in de name of all de saints, is de matter with you, Ma'mselle Harriet," exclaimed Madame "Chose."

"Nothing, ma'am — oh, nothing," faltered out the poor girl.

"And who," screamed Mrs. Franklin, involuntarily snatching the yard measure from the lady abbess, "in the name of wonder, are Lieutenant O'Rotherham and Mrs. Dowbiggin?"

"I'll tell you, ma am," sobbed the recovering, yet still half-fainting girl; — "Lieutenant O'Rotherham, ma'am, is an Irish gentleman on half-pay, to whom I was once attached; Mrs. Dowbiggin is *my* aunt, and Mr. Smith is the respectable individual to whom I am engaged to be married."

This was a thunderstroke to Saville, who never having seen the "young person" in the whole course of his existence, was overwhelmed at finding her so perfectly *au fait* as to Mrs. Franklin's friends and connections, a knowledge

of whom she had appeared so furiously resolved to disavow; but the reader will vainly attempt to comprehend the nature of his feelings, when Mrs. Franklin, turning upon him a look expressive of mingled anger and contempt, exclaimed —

"So, sir, your visit to this house, then, was intended for this young lady, rather than for me?"

"Indeed, indeed, no," said Saville; "the Fates, to call them nothing worse, seem to have taken the management of this affair into their own hands. I do assure you I never saw this young lady in my life, before this minute."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Franklin, incredulously.

"Indeed, ma'am," said the distressed damsel, "the gentleman never did, nor did I ever see him in the whole course of my existence till now."

"What for you faint, Miss Harriet," said the supreme head of the establishment, "if you no know him?"

"Because," said she, "in Mr. Saville I expected to see a person totally different from that gentleman; a person with whom I am slightly acquainted, but whose name I did not know; and who, from the description given me by one of my father's servants, I concluded to be Mr. S."

"And pray, Miss," said Mrs. Franklin, who could not bear to be imposed upon, and who did not believe one syllable of the young person's story, "who may your father happen to be?"

"His name, like mine," replied Miss Harriet, "is Hammerman; he is the auctioneer and house-agent of whom you hired your house in Harley Street, and has now again the letting of it."

"And then," said Saville, "Mrs. Richards is ——"

"One of my father's servants, who is living there in the day-time, to show it to any body who wishes to see it."

"And your name is Harriet?"

"Exactly so."

"And you wrote the ——"

"Yes, yes," anxiously interrupted the young lady, not anxious that Madame should become more than necessarily acquainted with all her little amatory proceedings; "and

all this mistake may be attributed to the stupidity of that old woman."

"Or," said Saville, "to my own blindness. — Oh, Mrs. Franklin, what sufficient apology can I make for having permitted myself for a moment to believe that your daughter could have been guilty of the indiscretion which I have attributed to her, or imagine her capable of conduct so incompatible with her station or feelings — how can I atone——"

"Well, I am sure, sir," said Miss Hammerman; "you may as well keep a civil tongue in your head, or perhaps some of these fine mornings you may get yourself affronted. The gentleman I took for you would be preciously angry with me if he knew who I had mistaken him for; and as for conduct, and compatibility, and all that, my father is one of the churchwardens, and if you offer to talk scandal about me, he'll make no more ado than whip you up in a white sheet, and force you to do penance in the parish church."

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed the lady of the house; "vat all dis — put your tongue into your teeths, Miss, and leave de room, incessament — instantly — go out wid you. Miss Farrow, go down and tell Miss Frowsty to send away the chairmen."

Saville felt considerably relieved by the discovery that he had been the victim of a blunder only; and that the voluntary *éclaircissement* afforded by Miss Hammerman was so admirably *apropos:* it did, indeed, what few other things could have done — clear up a mystery in which he had been most extraordinarily involved, and which, in the outset of the adventure, appeared likely so far to have incensed Mrs. Franklin against him, as to induce her to forego the pleasure of ever hearing anything more about him.

Mrs. Franklin, as we have already seen, was, like many thousand others, always extremely good-humoured when she was pleased. Recollecting what she had been extremely fond of in her youthful days, and not indeed having entirely abandoned, the practice of flirting, whenever an opportunity offered, she was always disposed to

afford every facility to the soft communings of lovers and their *beloveds;* and as we have ventured already to premise, she liked Saville. She saw that Harriet liked him — they found him extremely pleasant; and it is extraordinary what rapid strides a man makes, and what a firm hold he obtains in a house where he is so fortunate as to please both mother and daughter. If Mrs. Franklin had been asked what would have been most agreeable in the way of matrimony for her child, she would have confessed a marriage with Saville; but the admission which he had made of his inability to "settle," or indeed to maintain the charges of an establishment, joined to the extreme tenuity of Harriet's fortune, and the overpowering influence of her father's friend, decided the question, and so separated two fond hearts.

With these feelings, however, towards him, Mrs. Franklin listened not only with tenderness, but even anxiety to Saville's vindication of his conduct, until she became at length satisfied, that even Harriet herself could not have been offended at what were proved to be his misfortunes only; unless indeed it were that he had intimated a belief of her being the companion of a rakish half-pay lieutenant in an excursion to Epsom, and entertained a suspicion of her having committed the infinitely greater atrocity of eating beef-steak pie and "pickled inions," moistening her ruby lips at the same time with a "swig" of Whitbread's "heavy wet."

Convinced, therefore, that as he had never seen Miss Hammerman, and was perfectly unknown to her, that he was perfectly exonerated upon the score of infidelity, Mrs. Franklin, who admired constancy to her very heart, disarmed herself of the yard measure and a roll of gros de Naples, which, in the moment of alarm, she had pressed into the service of her threatened dignity and person, and kindly offered Saville a seat in her carriage to the hotel in Jermyn Street, whither she had shifted her quarters previous to her departure for the country.

Miss Hammerman got severely lectured by her principal for her numerous blunders, and left the house, declaring she never would return to it. In the sequel, she, like the

young lady for whom she had been mistaken, married *her* Mr. Smith, to the popularity of whose name very much of the mischief that has already occurred to our hero may be attributed.

It is a common, although now, perhaps, somewhat formal expression, that such a one has been "kind in his carriage" towards another; never could it have been said with greater propriety or a stricter regard to truth, than in the case of Mrs. Franklin, who "in her carriage," on the way to her hotel, expressed herself not only completely satisfied of the absurdity of the incident from the effects of which Charles Saville had just been extricated, but sorry that circumstances, inevitable and imperious, should have induced her to advocate a marriage for her daughter, not only not in perfect accordance with her views or principles, but which was practically in decided opposition to the encouragement which he must be conscious she had given him to visit, and indeed, for a short period, almost domesticate himself with her and her daughter. Yet to Saville, what was kindness, what was civility — it is true they conciliated and soothed; but a murderer who smiles is still a murderer; and in the present case the murder of his happiness was actually committed, and would soon out; for it appeared that Harriet was at the present moment staying with her aunt, somewhere in the vicinity of London, where she was to remain until her marriage, her *respectable* intended being constantly associated with her, twaddling and toddling after her, wherever she went.

"I have candidly told you the whole history," said Mrs. Franklin; "and I will now return you the letter which you intended for my poor child. All efforts to change her destiny would now be unavailing; and when I repeat that I am sure the avowal of your affection for her would have exceedingly distressed her, I trust you will think me justified in what I have done; and above all, that in the present stage of our affairs, you will not avail yourself of any information I may have given you, to attempt any plan for seeing her clandestinely, or persuading her to any step which could only terminate in the ruin of both of you."

"I cannot so quietly admit the necessity of ruin," said Saville, encouraged by the suavity of Mrs. Franklin's manner, and his own belief that women of her turn of character generally desire men *not* to do any thing which they particularly wish to have done; "I have an independence, small, I admit, but with Harriet's, surely, if her opinion coincides with yours, a cottage and true affection ——"

"Are beautiful things in a novel or a poem, Mr. Saville," said the matron. "Nothing sounds prettier in rhyme or melodious prose, than twining woodbine at the casement, and curling smoke in the valley; but in real life ——"

"Oh, in real life, with a competence, however small, we might surely be happy."

"Not with the anger of a parent, and the recollection of a broken promise hanging over her," said Mrs. Franklin. "I have been a close observer of life for many years, and I scarcely recollect, in the whole course of my observation, to have seen a runaway match turn out well. The spirit which prompts rebellion to a parent, subsequently may induce revolt against a husband; and those feverish dispositions, which, taking fire on the instant, excite a young woman to commit imprudent actions while she is single, are extremely likely to drive her to the perpetration of vicious ones, when she is married."

Arguing to a lover is like preaching to the wind, or whistling against thunder; yet Saville had so much method in his madness, as to admit the improbability of Harriet's acceding to such a proposition, and the impropriety of his suggesting it; and parted from her mother with a conviction that she was a most amiable parent, and shook hands with her when he left the hotel, where she had redelivered him his letter, in perfect friendship, and certainly more in sorrow than in anger at the course she had considered it right to adopt.

CHAPTER V.

THERE are certain human acts which may be considered unquestionably decisive: knocking away the dog-shores of a ship just ready for launching, cutting the last rope which holds a balloon just ready for ascending, drawing the bolt of the new drop when the culprits are ready for execution — such proceedings, brief and momentary as their continuance may be, are clearly irrevocable. The last smile which Mrs. Franklin bestowed upon Charles Saville, was not one bit less conclusive than any one of those; nor was the bitterness of his lot at all qualified, by the suddenness with which he had tumbled from his regions of fancied happiness. It lost none of its misery by its abruptness; and when he turned away from the door of the hotel, although Jermyn-street was as full of carriages as usual, and he was jostled by the unsentimental foot passengers, who "pushed on" to their different occupations with the most inveterate energy, he felt as if he were alone in all the wide world.

To reflect on what was past was worse than death, and to look forward to what was to come, was equally terrible. It seemed not only as if he had in a moment been deprived of the stay and comfort of his present existence, but as if he had lost the point of sight in the perspective of his future life. For whom was he now to toil and labour? who was to excite and encourage his exertions? who was to reward those exertions?—Harriet was another's—and such another's. The viscount, or even the baronet, would have been better than this. Mrs. Smith — plain Mrs. Smith — to be only *that* — one of a hundred thousand Mrs. Smiths — and if distinguished from the vast herd, to be recognised as Mrs. Twaddle Smith; and then that "disparity of years," of which the said Smith had twaddled, was it likely that the idol of his heart could be happy under such circumstances? surely not. Surely she did not quite hate *him* — Charles Saville; he knew she did not. Should he pursue his flying fair? should he snatch her from the arms of her respectable intended, and in the teeth of all his promises to him-

self, and his protestations to her mother, force her into disobedience, and carry her away to the pastoral scenes of which he had spoken so rapturously and yet so unsuccessfully to that amiable gentlewoman.

She was domiciliated with her aunt — not indeed in Carburton-street, Fitzroy-square, but in the neighbourhood of Weybridge. Various means were canvassed, and sundry devices considered by the wavering lover, coupled with a careful inspection of the map of Surrey, in order to ascertain the shortest cut from the retreat of his fair one into the North Road, if so lengthened a flight should be necessary. He had by no means come to a resolution upon this important point; but he had, as it will be seen, admitted the principle, and that was going a considerable way into the matter.

A lover without a confidant is like a watch without a spring — a well without a bucket — or a lady without a looking-glass; and accordingly Charles Saville, like the rest of the fraternity, forthwith provided himself with one. During the prosperous days of his attachment, he did not discover the absolute necessity for such support, and to his vain independence during that blissful period may be attributed much of the embarrassment into which he had plunged; but now that he had to moan and complain, he felt how great an alleviation it would be to his grief, if he could find an ear wherein he might pour some of his sorrow. This feeling, which was not very dissimilar in principle to that of the Irishman who rejoiced in the notion, that a journey of eighteen miles performed by himself and friend, would be divided into two portions of nine miles each, he resolved to indulge; and after a due and delicate advance upon so nice a subject, he opened the whole matter to a friend long known, and often tried in matters of worldly concern, but to whom he had never yet confided the state of his heart as regarded Miss Harriet Franklin.

The name of this friend was Alvingham; and although his Majesty still retains a confessor at court, for the use of the royal household, it was not because Mr. Alvingham was already in orders, and an officiating minister in one of

the fashionable churches in the metropolis, that Saville selected him as the depository of his secrets: oral confession formed no part of the lover's creed, nor did he believe that having the cure of souls did in any way qualify his reverend friend for the cure of hearts. His object in putting him in possession of the state of his affairs with Harriet, was to receive from him such counsel as might regulate his conduct, as it might affect the object of his love; for after all, *he* affords the strongest proof of sincere affection towards a woman, who, without one selfish feeling, consents to give her up rather than injure her worldly comfort, and thus abandons his own happiness for the sake of securing hers. It was this view which Mr. Alvingham took of the subject under discussion. With a sober moderation, suited to his habit and calling, he represented to his more ardent friend the imprudence of rashly violating his word, or at least his implied promise to Mrs. Franklin, and incurring the heavy responsibility of engaging a child in a league against a parent.

"Ah, but," said Saville, "I do really believe by her manner that she would not be sorry if I rescued her daughter from the fate that awaits her."

"In that case," replied Alvingham, "she must be doubly base and culpable. If she have sufficient clearness of perception to anticipate unhappiness for her daughter in the marriage to which she has destined her, what can be offered in extenuation of her concluding such an alliance?"

"The influence of her late husband's friend," answered Saville; "the executor of his will; the trustee of his child."

"Let the man possess all the influence," said Alvingham, "to which his three-fold occupations in the family may entitle him, and yet I cannot perceive that his marrying a girl young enough to be his grand-daughter forms any part of the duty of any one of them."

"Well, then," said Charles, eager to get an opinion favourable to his eloping scheme, "would you have me risk the momentary anger of all the interested parties, and strike the blow?"

"By no means," said Alvingham. "We have hitherto discussed your proposal merely as affecting the relative feelings and duties of parent and child. Now look deeper into the question. You have already told me her mother's opinion of the poetical notion of 'love in a cottage;' examine the case yourself. You have but a very small independence; her fortune, as far as it extends, is dependent upon the will of her mother; and that mother is apparently dependent upon this formidable trustee. You must labour for the means to live, to support your wife, and, if Heaven should so ordain, your family; ask yourself whether you are justified in snatching this amiable young creature from a sphere of life in which, although perhaps she may not have partaken of the more splendid gifts of fortune, she has enjoyed at least an undisturbed and happy competence. Ask yourself, I say, my dear friend, whether you have a right to withdraw her from scenes of comfort and serenity to place her amidst the stormy elements to which a young, unknown, professional man must naturally be exposed."

"I deny," said Saville, "that Harriet is at this moment enjoying either serenity or comfort. She is unhappy and miserable, as all girls must be whose inclinations are forced, and who are ——"

"Stay, stay, Saville," interrupted Alvingham, "by what rule, by what criterion are you judging the young lady's feelings? by what standard do you regulate the admeasurement of her sufferings? All you know of the history seems to me to be, that having been introduced to a very charming person, you began first to admire, and then to love her. You never declared your affection, but lingered on, basking in the sun-shine of her bright eyes, until a more active and yet more wary suitor took the decisive step which you had neglected, and obtained the prize, which, by your own admission, you did not think worth asking for, until, in fact, it was disposed of to your rival."

"My dear friend," said Saville, "it is perfectly clear to me that you were never placed in the position in which I found myself relatively with Miss Franklin. I was living

constantly with them, almost from the first until the last day of my acquaintance with her. I had no thoughts of happiness out of her sight; the minutes seemed hours when I was away from her; and it seemed as if nature contrived to maintain the equation of time by turning the hours into minutes when I was with her. The incidents of one day led to engagements for the next; and then I was fascinated and happy I knew — for even a dullard such as I can find out *that* — I was not disagreeable either to mother or daughter; they both esteemed me, each in her different degree. I knew what were her expectations for her daughter in the way of marriage. I saw that she was almost aware of the imprudence of permitting my constant association with her child, being herself conscious that our marriage was out of the question. I saw more — I saw that they both dreaded lest I should make the declaration which would infallibly separate us eternally, while I trembled under the daily anticipation of some remark on the subject from the elder lady herself; and thus we went on, until Crœsus in the sticking-plaster shorts hobbled in upon all the confidence of half a million, and snapped up my unhappy Harriet."

"There we differ," replied his friend. "I admit all your doubts, and delicacies, and difficulties — they were all natural enough; but I do not admit that you have any right to presume that a young lady who accepts an offer has thereby rendered herself unhappy. She has decided — she is gone; and if you will take the advice of one rather your senior, and whose professional avocations and their preparatory studies have caused him to sober his feelings and regulate his passions, you will reconcile yourself to a loss which may be repaired by a second choice, and permit the young lady who has decided for herself to put in practice her scheme of happiness without further interruption."

"My dear Alvingham, you talk so rationally that I am sure you can have no idea what a man really in love feels," said Saville.

"My dear Saville," replied Alvingham, "there you are as much mistaken as I fancy you may be with respect to

Miss Franklin's misery. I have been in love; I am in love; and I should be extremely sorry if I were not."

"Well, but then," said Saville, "your beloved has not been snatched from you at the moment she was within your reach."

"No," said Alvingham, smiling, "she certainly has not. If I had delayed and procrastinated she might have been. I, on the contrary, have woo'd and won her."

"And with the consent of all parties?"

"Of all," replied the other. "It would look ill for one of my cloth to appear in the character of a scheming lover; although such parts have been enacted by some of my reverend brethren. I have obtained the consent of my Eliza and the sanction of her parents, and her brother unites us, next week, at St. George's, Hanover-square."

"Why, I hate you," said Saville, "absolutely hate you. Do you imagine, my dear friend, that if I had had the slightest idea that you were yourself a happy lover, a well received son-in-law, and a welcome nephew, that I would have consulted you upon my unfortunate case — not I; as Sir Robert Howard says —

"The happy seldom heed th' unhappy's pain."

And with every respect for your kindness of disposition and tenderness of heart, it is impossible to make you, a 'prosperous wooer,' comprehend, in the smallest degree, the wretchedness which a being placed in my present situation is doomed to suffer."

"You do me injustice," said Alvingham; "my own happiness — for I *am* happy so far as worldly matters are concerned — does not in the least incapacitate me from sympathising most heartily with you in your distress; all I mean to offer to your attention in any thing I may venture to say, is the fact, that your happiness will not be secured, — you may rely upon it I am right, — by overthrowing the present scheme of happiness which the Franklin family have now arranged. And recollect what a pang will you feel, in addition to all the others which the ruin of your Harriet's prospects will some day or other inflict, when you have to reproach yourself, or, it may be, even are reproached

by *her*, with having disunited her from her mother, by exciting her to disobedience and rebellion."

"Her mother would be glad I did this 'gentle violence' of saving her," said Saville.

"Upon my word," replied Alvingham, "the Franklins seem to be a most extraordinary race: the daughter, devoted to you, very quietly consents to marry your rival; and the mother, who advocates the match, would be extremely glad if you were able to break it off. Really, you must see this family through a curious medium, or with eyes not much clearer than Cupid's own. However, you have asked my advice, and I have given it; — whether you will act upon it is another question."

Saville's answer to the doubt implied in the last observation was evasive. The truth seemed to be, that, like all men, where love or marriage form the subject-matter of debate, Saville had made up his mind as to his future conduct long before he took the pracaution of consulting his reverend friend; and like all his bewitched compeers, under the magical influence of woman, agreed with his counsellor only just so long as his advice exactly tallied with his inclinations.

Alvingham saw this, and therefore concluded his lecture, having himself an appointment to call on his intended, almost precisely at the time fixed upon by Saville for his confession; and preferring, as a good pastor ever does, practice to preaching, he rather gladly dismissed the discussion and the disciple; not however without begging him, whatever he might think proper to do with regard to Miss Franklin, not to forget that the parsonage-house of Harlingham was always open to him, and expressing a hope that as it soon would have a mistress, it would not lose any of the attractions which, as the residence of an old and faithful friend, it might be supposed to possess.

Thus parted these worthy compeers; affording in their minds, tempers, characters, dispositions, and circumstances, two of the most striking examples of dissimilitude that, perhaps, were ever exhibited under one roof. Alvingham happy, contented, and blest with quiet, competence, and every hope of domestic happiness; Saville, wretched, rest-

less, and dissatisfied with himself, and everybody else, looking for support to a profession for which it seemed he had but little turn or talent, separated from her with whom alone he imagined it possible to exist, and not in the slightest degree decided as to the course of action which he had best pursue, either to recover her forthwith, or relinquish her altogether.

One incident occurred on his return home to his lodgings in the evening, which excited him in an awful degree, and roused him from the stupor of grief into which he appeared to have fallen. He found a square packet of papers upon his table; a momentary glance sufficed to convince him, that the address was written by either Mrs. Frankin or Harriet. Habit, association, and perhaps the same master, give so strong a *family* likeness to the hand-writing of mothers and daughters, in these days of elegant education and literary unintelligibility, that he could not, at first sight, decide which of them "had done the deed;" but that the parcel came from the family he was convinced.

It seemed an age till the servant left the room — he felt that he dare not trust himself to open the magic paper while he remained near him, and might be a witness to the violent emotions which its contents might produce. At length alone, he made a desperate plunge, and cut the string with which it was tied; and found in his hands three or four of Haynes Bayley's sweetest and most touching melodies; the all-accomplished Mrs. Norton's "Undying One, and other Poems;" "The Pleasures of Memory;" and two volumes of "Debrett's Peerage;" all of which he had at different times, on different occasions, taken or sent to Harley-street; and which were now, after the general rummage, returned to their lawful owner, with "Mrs. Franklin's compliments," written on a slip of paper, and deposited within the parcel.

Amongst the innumerable ingenuities of a lover, none are more remarkable than those which he displays in groundlessly exhilarating or depressing his spirits; exciting or damping his hopes, and perverting whatever he sees or hears, or whatever happens, however accidentally, into

something bearing most pointedly and decidedly upon himself, and his own particular *affaire de cœur*.

Nobody, except a lover, or one who at some period of his life had laboured heavily under the complaint, could picture to himself the assiduity with which Charles Saville searched and sought over every corner and cranny of Mrs. Franklin's parcel, to discover something about it that might convey a hint or a meaning, either from herself or Harriet. There certainly was a dash under the Mrs. in the brief note—what did *that* mean? to point out particularly that Harriet had nothing to do with returning the books; did it mean that he was not to consider that return any thing more than a mere matter of course; did it imply that, although Mrs. Franklin sent them back, Miss Franklin would rather have kept them as relics of former foregone happiness?

This consideration of the question, which had, in point of fact, nothing whatever in it, occupied him at least a quarter of an hour. Then an investigation of the seal was commenced; a thistle, with the *device*, "dinna forget"—that was odd—it must mean *something!*—"dinna forget" was such an extraordinary injunction just at the breaking off of an engagement—was he to gather much encouragement from this? Lover-like, he attributed a motive to the commonest action of his Harriet's life. "Dinna forget," he repeated at least a hundred times in a hundred different tones; and if he had implicitly obeyed the injunction contained in the important words, he could not have failed to remember, that the blood-stone bearing this trite and hackneyed impression (without which no Scotch woman, married or single, matron or daughter, is to be found) was one of a circular cluster of seals, moving on an agate handle, at the purchase of which, at Grayhurst and Harvey's, he had himself been present. There is little doubt, however, if even this had entered his mind, he would have drawn some favourable conclusion from the coinciding circumstance of his having been one of the party when it was bought, and its appearing on the packet destined, as it outwardly appeared, to terminate his connection with the family; he never taking into the calculation, that which

happened to be the fact, that the memorable parcel, upon which so much appeared to depend, had been made up by Mrs. Franklin's maid, who had concluded her operation of packing, by giving it the seal which had so strongly excited all his tenderest feelings.

There were, however, other circumstances upon which Saville dwelt which might have been rather more important. In turning over the leaves of Mrs. Norton's poems, he perceived that some passages had been doubled down; some even appeared to have been pencil-marked.

> " Would I were with thee! every day and hour
> Which now I spend so sadly far from thee!
> Would that my form possess'd the magic power,
> To follow where my heavy heart would be;
> Whate'er thy lot — by land or sea,
> Would I were with thee eternally!"

This, page 259., was doubled down. It is impossible to describe the thrill — the chill — the glow he felt at seeing the mark. The ninth page farther on, he received a similar distinction.

> " Oh, Edward! dark my doom — this heart will love for ever,
> Though thou wilt never share its joy or pain!
> Thine eye will turn to mine, and meet its glance; but never
> Beam fondly back on her's who loves in vain;
> But when weary life is o'er, and in the grave I'm lying,
> (Silently a woman's heart should hide its love and break)
> Then dearest, *then* some voice shall tell thee sighing,
> How weary was my life to me for Edward's sake."

" For *Edward's* sake!" repeated Saville. — "Old Smith's name cannot be Edward," thought he — his vanity whispered " *nomine mutato de te,*" she sings, or rather marks what others sing. It certainly was very odd — the lines were apposite and applicable — she had avowedly no opportunity of directly communicating her sentiments, even had she the boldness to make a confession. Here was a delicate mode of explaining the real state of her heart, and expressing the true character of her feelings; — it must be so. — All the schemes of contrivances and stratagems with which the pages of novels and romances were formerly filled occurred to his memory. Telegraphic signals — sympathetic inks — cyphers, and keys, lemon juice of new milk, and every other imaginable device for clandestine correspondence, flitted before his sight; and upon these

grounds, and no better, he resolved to put into immediate execution, at all events, the preliminary arrangements for carrying off the broken-hearted Harriet.

Debrett's Peerage, which lay next to the poems on the table, became mechanically the next object of his observation, and he took the first volume in his hand. He threw it from him with a toss of indifference; when, lo, and behold! the book of fate, that magic tome, which displays to longing eyes the wonders of "the creation," fell open at a particular page, as if it had been long "used to it." When he examined it, he found that the page was particularly thumbed and tumbled, and moreover duly marked by a "dog's ear," even more decided than that which had attracted his notice to the poems, — he read as follows: —

"Henry Augustus Baxter, Earl of Kencherton, Viscount Pertwood, and Baron Baxter of Saxmundham, in the county of Suffolk, G.C.H.; a General in the army; Colonel of the 103d regiment of foot, and a Commissioner of the metropolitan roads; married, July 7. 1798, the Right Honourable Lady Mary Witherington, only daughter of George, late Earl of Crawley, by Mary-Jane, third daughter of William, fifth Duke of Twickenham. Her ladyship died March 4. 1830, leaving the earl the following issue,—

1. Charles George Augustus, b. April 15, 1799. d. young.
2. Emily Mary, b. June 4. 1800. m. 8 Sept. 1819, the Hon. William Boggis, third son of Lord Pauperton, of Killymidamnimo, N. B.
3. Henry Augustus, Viscount Pertwood, b. June 18. 1802; a Lieut.-col. in the army and M.P.
4. William, who d. young.

Creations. Barony, 1584. Earl, 1766.
Motto. 'PERSEVERANCE.'
Town residence. Grosvenor-square.
Seats. Kencherton House, Gloucestershire, Turflands, Suffolk, Twickenham Castle, Cumberland."

No sooner had Charles perused this much loved, much read page to the bottom, than his ardour cooled, his enthusiasm drooped, and from the heights of ecstasy he precipitated himself into the "deepest" depths of despair. With how much reason he had previously exalted, or what ground he had for at present thus debasing his hopes, it is impossible to say; but the immediate cause of the sudden and desperate change in his feelings was the fact, that this very Lord Pertwood, as the reader may perhaps remember, was at one time, and oh! (which made the matter still worse) at the very period when Harriet Franklin borrowed this very book, a dangler, as the world thought, and a professed lover, as her mother said, of that very Harriet herself.

Did she then seriously think of him? — had she, with all the dislike and distaste for him, which she had professed to Charles, really contemplated an union with him? Had she with anxiety and interest traced his lineage, scanned his pretensions, and read over the list of the titles inherent in his race? Could it be possible? What she had done with the baronet he could not, from equally good authority, determine; there were no data in Debrett to go upon; but the one case was quite sufficient to overturn his visionary schemes, and rase his castles to their ethereal foundations.

It is curious to think how these "trifles light as air" should set a sensible man up and pull him down again in so brief a space of time; that it had the latter effect may be easily believed, when the reader learns that all the preparations which Saville had resolved to make for his northern expedition were for the moment abandoned; and the intensity of devotion with which he had, an hour before, loved his Harriet, was metamorphosed into a sort of restless discontent with himself for having so easily been made the dupe of her heartlessness. What effect upon his future life this newly-excited feeling produced, the reader will, perhaps, learn in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

How long the sensitive lover remained in this desponding mood, it is neither possible nor necessary for us to know. His feelings were destined to undergo a new trial, in consequence of his having accepted an invitation from his friend Alvingham to accompany him to dine with the family out of which he had selected a daughter, the charming and accomplished young lady to whom he was on the eve of marriage. In the circle of this happy and contented family he saw his friend received with warmth, affection, and cordiality, each of its members appearing to strive who should render him most welcome and comfortable; every allusion which was made spoke of anticipated happiness; and Charles came away fully convinced, that a man treated and circumstanced like his reverend friend, must be the happiest of his sex; but then, charming as were the Miss Simpsons, there was not one out of the whole nine, for of that number did the muse-like family consist, at all comparable with Harriet Franklin.

Still it was impossible for him, in his then temper of mind, not to be painfully and forcibly struck by the contrast which Alvingham's position afforded to that in which he himself was placed. Why had not *he* taken orders and gone into the church? Why had not he thus secured at a *coup* a competency, which, however moderate, was enough, since it gave his friend a right to make the match he had, instead of choosing a profession in which nothing but lengthened toil, superior ability, and constant application, could make him either affluent or eminent. There are professions in which favour and affection may rapidly promote a man, but in Law and Physic, however much adventitious circumstances may sometimes aid the latter, merit alone can stand, and make its way. Let a man be never so kind of heart or generous in disposition, health and wealth, life and property, are matters not to be trifled with; civility and ceremony, partiality and patronage, are, in such affairs, out of the question; and he that is entangled in difficulties, or assailed by sickness, will seek the

best lawyer and the best doctor, without any great regard to personal feelings or private predilections.

"And yet" thought poor Saville, by way of consoling himself, "I could not have done as Alvingham has done I had no interest to procure such preferment as he holds. Why do I lament not having done what I could not do? or why repine at the complete success of his scheme of rational happiness, when circumstances have barred me from a similar course."

The future Mrs. Alvingham,—and the reader is destined to know more of her hereafter, — was the very picture, as the old nurses say, of good humour. She was fair, rosy-cheeked, red-lipped, and inclining to plumpness; a description which will no doubt inspire the skinny and consumptive of my readers with horror: all the withering spectres about town, with long fleshless fingers and ribs, affect to shudder at any thing bordering upon the *en bon point*; a fat woman (and what they call fat is, like Miss Mary Simpson, only plump) is associated in their ideas and conversation with vulgarity and coarseness, and they strain their ghost-like countenances into an expression of horror at the idea of any thing bearing more flesh about it than themselves.

To these, the kind-hearted, good-natured Mary would have been "oppressive,"—dear girl, to those who were less refined, but infinitely more delicate than the anti-obesity phantoms who haunt the world, she was every thing that was amiable and prepossessing. Of course, as Saville was Alvingham's friend, she knew the whole history of his love and disappointment before she had seen him. Women are full of consideration and kindness, and sympathy, and Mary felt a deep interest in the fate of their new acquaintance: she was pleased with his manners, admired his accomplishments, and although his conversation, under the influence of his sorrow, was not so gay and brilliant as it sometimes was wont to be, she could judge of what its bright days were, by what she saw of it in its gloom; as a man looks at a villa in winter and says, "What a lovely spot this *must* be in summer!" and she rejoiced that her future spouse had such a friend, and sincerely

hoped, in all the hospitality of her heart, that he would come and be a frequent guest at Harlingham Parsonage.

Scarcely any thing more seriously annoys an unsettled, distracted lover, than the spectacle of a happy family going on almost mechanically in its round of quiet arrangements: — the sons pursuing their avocations, or enjoying their pleasures; the daughters dividing their time between study and recreation, amusement and charity; obedient children to indulgent parents, who, blessed with competence, and not cursed with vanity, permit the feelings and inclinations of their offspring, as to their eventual settlement in life, to have, at least, fair play, and evince a readiness to conduce to their happiness in the most important particulars, by moderating their expectations in making alliances for them, and preferring modest worth and unassuming merit to the more brilliant but much less suitable pretensions of exalted birth or extensive fortune.

When Charles Saville returned to town from Mr. Simpson's snug, well-placed villa at Clapham, he was haunted by the recollection of the smiling countenances of all the young ladies, made restless and uncomfortable by the remembrance of the ease and comfort which his friend seemed to enjoy in his well-chosen road to matrimony. It struck him, however, in the midst of his woes, that the amiability of the old gentleman, — or "Governor," as his sons were jocosely in the habit of calling him, — would be very speedily extended to himself, if he could direct his feelings, and conquer his attachment for Harriet Franklin, and attach himself to one of his amiable daughters; and to be sure Sarah-Jane was an extremely nice girl, excessively good-natured, quite enough accomplished, and although, as Edmund Burke said of his wife, not made to be the admiration of every body, she seemed formed to make the happiness of one; but thus to abandon all the hopes of his life, to surrender a chance of his beloved for the sake of Miss Sally Simpson, — the idea only flashed into his mind to be extinguished for ever.

He resolved not to re-visit the philanthropic plains of Clapham; he determined no longer to consult Alvingham

on the measures to be pursued. He was convinced that a matter-of-fact, jog-trot lover, *fêted*, favoured, and accepted, could never sympathise with *him*; and therefore hastily bidding him adieu for the present, he came to a decision of even more importance than that of abandoning his friend, and that was, — to carry off his beloved. He had heard Mr. Simpson talk of the real, inherent, and unalterable affection of parents for their children; he felt convinced of the genuineness of all that gentleman's doctrines; and before two o'clock in the morning, after his return from the villa, had completely satisfied himself that if he made the dash, pounced on his innocent dove, and carried her off, long before the honey-moon waned, he and his bride would be welcomed back by his amiable mother-in-law, who would, as he believed, do every thing in her power to compensate to the elderly willow-wearing swain for his loss, even to the extent of offering *herself* to become Mrs. Smith, in lieu of her daughter.

This resolution once formed, the reader may easily suppose that the hours until he could obtain the attendance of his servant passed heavily with Saville. The inevitable delay, however, gave him time to arrange his plans; and long before his valet and prime-minister was up, and down, he had settled the programme of the whole performance.

This valet was a character — that is to say, if having no character except that which he brought from his last place justifies one in saying so. His name was Twigg; he was his master's counsellor and adviser upon many occasions; and it was to his not having employed him in the Harley-street stratagem, that Saville attributed its lamentable failure, and his consequent disagreeable exposure. Saville had a high opinion of Twigg's judgment upon many topics; he had, before this, discussed the subject of the elopement, and had been much edified by his man's remarks and observations; he was attached to him for his fidelity and prudence, and considered him "quite a treasure" in the way of guarding him against imposition, and directing him to bargains; the truth being, that Twigg had not three ideas in the world beyond taking the best possible care of him-

self. The only virtue he possessed consisted in a studious accommodation of himself to his master's will and opinion, and in always agreeing with him upon every point under discussion; constantly appearing to originate something which his master pronounced exceedingly wise and clever. but which, in fact, was neither more nor less than a new version of some old proposition which had been previously made by Saville himself.

"Twigg," said Saville, "shut the door."—The door of course was shut. —"I am resolved to put my scheme in practice with regard to Miss Franklin. Have you got the paper about the line of posting down the north road, which you had from Newman?"

"I have sir," said Twigg.

"I cannot sit down quietly and give her up," said Saville; "the affair is perfectly simple."

"Very, sir," said Twigg.

"Of course every man knows his own business best," said Saville; "but—I—upon my life—I don't know—I think it is better at once to make the plunge; and I question whether it is not wiser to be rash for an hour, than miserable for life."

"It *is* a question, sir."

"Yet, Twigg, if I hesitate, the opportunity is lost."

"So it is, sir."

"She cannot fail of being wretched with Smith."

"Impossible!" said Twigg.

"He is a worthy man," said Saville, muttering to himself.

"Very, sir," said Twigg.

"But not suited to *her*."

"By no means," said Twigg.

"He's sixty-three at least."

"Yes, sir, full sixty-three," said Twigg.

"That, to be sure, is not so very old."

"No, sir," said Twigg, "not so very old."

"Too old for a girl of nineteen."

'Oh! much too old, sir," said Twigg.

'I believe she is fond of *me*," said Saville—like a fool.

'Very, sir," said Twigg—like a knave.

'Do you think so, Twigg?" said Saville.

"I do, sir," replied Twigg.

"How d'ye know?"

"Umph! I don't *know*," said Twigg: "servants talk, sir."

"To be sure they do — very proper they should."

"Very, sir."

"Did Miss Franklin's maid ever touch upon the subject with you?"

"Do what, sir?" said Twigg.

"Speak of her young lady's affection for *me*?"

"In course, sir," said Twigg, "what I say to you upon that wo'n't go to the old lady?"

"Certainly not."

"Well," said Twigg, "we have argued it over now and then; and one night as we were sitting in the servants' hall — for there is no second table at Mrs. Franklin's — Thomas the footman comes to the door, and he says, says he to me, 'Saville, you're wanted.'"

"Saville?" said Charles, "Twigg, you mean."

"I mean Twigg, sir," replied he; "but we are always called after our masters' names — it saves trouble. 'Saville,' says he, you're wanted.' 'Ah,' says Miss Johnstone, Miss Harriet's maid, says she, 'the time isn't far distant, I think, when we shall all be united in one establishment.'"

"That looks ominous," said Saville.

"Very, sir," answered Twigg.

"And with that, sir," continued Twigg, "we began talking of one foolish thing and another, and at last we talked about *you*, and I thought — thinks I — if my master marries Miss Franklin ——"

"Saville the second might marry Miss Johnstone," interrupted Charles.

"Exactly so, sir," said Twigg; "it's the way they does it in books, and plays, and novels, and ——"

"Perfectly natural," said Saville.

"Very, sir," said Twigg.

This enlightenment of the master as to the views of the servant was by no means disagreeable to Charles; he

felt that the community of interest between himself and his valet would insure the exertions and secure the fidelity of both domestics, and thought he perceived an additional zeal and ardour flash into his man's countenance and manner the moment after he had confided his real feelings and intentions to his master.

It may seem incompatible with the elegance of Saville's mind, and the delicacy of his feelings, that he could thus sympathise with "his flunky," as the Scots have it; but those who know the human heart, know that love, like misfortune, makes men acquainted with strange bedfellows.

> Love levels ranks, lords down to cellars bears,
> And bids the brawny porter walk up stairs;
> There's nought for love too high, nor aught too low,
> Oh, Huncamunca! Huncamunca, oh!

At all events, Twigg's exertions would be stimulated by the prospect of obtaining the hand of Miss Johnstone; who, according to his description of her, was "a delishos creechur, who wartzed like a German, and danced the gallipot to perfection."

Half of what had transpired during the colloquy between Saville and his servant was not necessary to decide the love-stricken gentleman in his course; all the arrangements necessary to the great enterprise were immediately canvassed. Charles had studied that part of the county of Surrey in which his beloved damsel was, as he believed, confined, with all the tact and zeal of a quarter-master-general; not a lane nor a brook was unknown to him; and he was as familiar with the circuit of country lying between Botleys and Littleton in one direction, and Oatlands and St. Anne's Hill in the other, as he ought to have been with the interior of Mr. Nibble's chambers, or the shady recesses of Paper Buildings and King's Bench Walk. In pursuance of designs originating in his knowledge of all the localities, he resolved upon fixing his head-quarters at Rattews, the Swan at Chertsey, whence he could despatch his faithful Leporello to the mansion of Harriet's aunt, and thence, under favour of "Miss J." (as Twigg always called her), receive those communications, upon which the happiness or misery of two fond hearts so entirely depended.

Accordingly, having previously put himself in communication with the Crown at Uxbridge, where horses were to be ready to convey him and his prize (with Twigg and Miss J. in the rumble) to St. Alban's, and thence to Gretna, he proceeded to the domicile of the said Rattew, into the yard of which he was driven, and where he descended from the carriage (jobbed from Messrs. Fell and Briggs, of Charles Street), and stepping with a dignified air into the midst of a group, composed of "mine host," Mrs. R., and a chambermaid, announced his intention of honouring the Swan, by occupying a sitting-room and bedroom there for a day or two.

"Sorry, sir," said Rat, "God bless me, so I am — not a bed or a room in the house but what is full. All engaged, sir, for Ascot races."

"Dear heart!" said Mrs. Swan.

"The deuce take it!" said Saville.

"Here's a pretty commence," said Twigg.

"This is very provoking," said Saville.

"Very, sir," sighed the servant.

"It always happens so," said Rattew; "for weeks and weeks we have not a soul near us, and then comes a crowd all in a lump. However, sir, walk in, we must try to get you a bed over the way, and as for a sitting-room, there's the assembly-room up stairs, with only one or two small parties, very genteel and agreeable, perhaps you would not mind joining them."

The idea of mingling in a mixed society, huddled together in an assembly-room, to a being, whose mind absorbed by one idea alone, was seeking the deepest solitude, in order to indulge his thoughts and arrange his plans, was worse than death. But what was to be done — there was, to be sure, another inn, but an inferior one; and that, in all probability, as full as the Swan. Calling, therefore, a little of the rationality of ordinary life to his assistance, Charles acceded to the double proposition of the landlord, and while the maid was sent in search of the promised bed, he proceeded up stairs to the apartment in which the various parties, designated "genteel and agreeable," were placed.

The company consisted of a city wine-merchant and his

wife, and his wife's sister (both ladies being natives of Maldon, in Essex, as it should seem), and a lover of the young lady. They were surrounding a large table in the centre of the room, on which were placed an extensive tea equipage, and a huge round of cold beef, an admixture of late dinner, well-timed tea, and early supper, with which all the practitioners showed themselves highly delighted.

This knot of laughers was shortly joined by a "stout gentleman" on crutches, who, it seemed, had selected that particular stage of his recovery from some serious accident to attend a race-course. He did not appear to have been previously acquainted with the party, but soon amalgamated with them; a process which the more rapidly took place after the return of the wine-merchant, from an expedition which he had undertaken for the purpose of making, with his own hands, a quantity of hot punch, sufficient to fill a bowl of proportions equal to those of the round of beef before noticed.

These worthies were enjoying themselves in a manner perfectly dreadful to Saville; they joked, they laughed, they discussed the court, the Maldon election, Sir Walter Scott's belief in ghosts, and what they should have for dinner the next day. At last it was agreed that each member of the party should choose a dish; and to Saville's horror and amazement, who had in vain attempted to close his ears to the conversation in progress, each individual of the *coterie* chose a roasted duck stuffed with sage and onions; the only variety arising in the selection of the stout gentleman with the crutches, who voted for goose with the same sauce.

The boisterous rapture with which this announcement was received rang through the lofty apartment; and, besides striking to the very heart of Saville, seemed most violently to discompose the serenity of two new associates, who, having previously secured stabling for their team, had abandoned their "coach and four" for a table at the "west end" of the room, where they were dining at ten, and giving and taking information from a jockey belonging to one of them, who had cantered down on his pony from Ascot to meet them.

The house began to fill; arrivals accumulated. The wine-merchant's agreeable wife, and her pretty and vivacious sister having retired, the wine-merchant, the lover, and the "stout gentleman," began a fresh bowl of punch, and seemed to be setting in for the evening, when Twigg was announced as wishing to speak to his master.

Every particle of intelligence, however minute, connected with the object of his visit to Chertsey, was of first-rate importance to Saville; he flew to grant an audience to his active minister.

"What is it?" said Saville.

"Miss and her Ma are to be at Ascot to-morrow, sir," said Twigg.

"How d'ye know?"

"They get their horses from here," said Twigg; "and four are ordered to be at the Lodge at twelve."

"Good—you must get horses for *me*, then," said Saville—"I'll go to."

"We can't get any horses for our carriage, sir," said Twigg,—"all bespoke. If I was you, sir, I would not go; better not be seen—let me alone for to-morrow."

"What will *you* do?" said Saville.

"Go to their house when they are gone," said Twigg, "see Miss J., and carry any message or note, or what not, that you may choose to send. If you meet Miss Harriet and the old one on the race-course, they'll all be in a regular lantarum puff, and we shall all be beaten."

"Faith," said Charles, not exactly comprehending the meaning of his excellent domestic's phraseology, but making a tolerably fair guess at its general bearing, "I think you are right—there are, as you say, strong reasons for my not going."

"Very, sir," said Twigg, "and one in particular, which beats all the rest,—you have no means of getting there; no—you keep here, sir, while I go skrimmiging about the premises, and I'll back my life to do some good; I don't speak without book, sir."

"It shall be so," said his master; "you shall take the opportunity of the family's absence, and see how the land lies.

"Oh!" said Twigg, with a most melancholy expression of countenance; "but do you write, sir. I'm sure Miss Harriet would like to have a billy of yours, ever so small a one, sir."

"Well," replied Charles, "there will be time enough for all that in the morning. Call me at nine, and in all probability I shall have written a few lines just stating ——"

"Oh! never mind what it is, sir," said Twigg, whose delight at finding himself his master's confidant seemed to have no bounds, "so you do but say something to her, just to cheer up her spirits."

"We'll see," said Saville; convinced, by the manner in which Twigg descanted upon the subject, that Harriet's maid had given him some very strong grounds for believing in the strength of her mistress's attachment to him.

Having dismissed his anxious retainer for the night, Saville proceeded to his bed-room on the opposite side of the street, to which he was ushered by the landlord himself, who in crossing the way, inquired how his guest intended to travel to the course in the morning.

"I am not going to the races," said Saville.

"No, sir!" said Rattew, with an expression of astonishment strong upon his countenance.

"No, I have other business to occupy me," said Saville; "besides, even if I had not, as you have no horses disengaged, I have no means of getting thither."

"Dear me, sir," said the civil Swan; "I'm very sorry for *that* — I dare say — indeed I am sure, if you wished for a cast up to the heath, Sir Harry Amadou would be delighted to take you in his four-horse coach, which is standing in the yard, provided as how you'd no objection to go inside and keep the blinds up; 'cause he can't bear to let people see he has got any inside passengers."

"Thank you for your consideration," said Saville, "but I prefer staying away."

"Perhaps you'd like to take a day's fishing till dinner-time, sir?" said Rattew. "We can get you a comfortable punt, with a nice easy arm-chair in it, and my missis would lend you an umbrella, and we'd send down a basket with a few sandwiches and something to drink; and under

the bulrushes in the mud just by the bridge, you might sit as snug as a bug in a rug all day long, and perhaps catch summut afore you comed in at night."

"No, I am obliged to you," replied the distracted lover, not a little amused at the description of "sport made easy," after the Rattew fashion, "I prefer doing nothing."

"Oh, well, sir, so long as you won't be dull."

"Not I — so good night — I shall breakfast about ten, and ——"

"When shall I send your servant to you?"

"I have already given him his orders," said Saville; and having so said, began to mount the minute staircase which led to his compact sleeping room, destined that night to be the scene of much meditation, many waking thoughts, and a few feverish dreams.

Long before nine o'clock, Chertsey was all alive; groups of pretty girls, dressed in their best, were seen either standing at doors, or peering from windows. Carriages of all descriptions were rolling through its lengthened street; and Saville was anxiously waiting the arrival of Twigg, at least an hour before he made his appearance. It was not even then without a struggle, that Charles acceded to his servant's suggestion of staying from the heath. Independently of the almost certainty of his being near his Harriet, of seeing her smile, perhaps hearing the melody of her voice, he had a worldly feeling of inclination to go to the races.

There are about Ascot a charm and interest created almost unconsciously, which give the annual meeting there a character totally distinct from that of any other races in the empire. Newmarket, as a place of business, of course transcends it; Epsom, for horses, and crowd, and bustle, far surpasses it; but there are in all the accessories of Ascot, a grace and beauty which every where else are wanting.

The being brought into contact with the sovereign upon a footing of equality has much to do with this feeling, as far as the multitude is concerned; they see the king in the enjoyment of the amusement of which they are themselves

partaking: there is a fellowship of feeling, a community of interest in this, which is gratifying to those who have, perhaps, no other opportunity of beholding the monarch in his private circle, and in moments of unstately leisure. Add to the complacency which this association confers, the very circumstance of his approach with all his brilliant *cortège*, the well-appointed carriages, rolling noiselessly along the velvet turf, surrounded by innumerable gaily-dressed servants, mounted on the finest horses,—the party itself combining the greatest and most distinguished of our fellow-subjects — passing to its destination, amidst the cheers of the people;—add to this again, that the scene is adorned and beautified by the presence of thousands of the loveliest women in the world, who here promenade the course between the races; and who shall wonder that even *he*, whose heart was fixed on one alone, should have felt some slight regret, at not mingling with that *one*, in an assembly so graced, so glorified.

Still, however, with all these feelings full and strong upon him, Charles felt conscious that the advice of the sagacious Twigg was to be implicitly followed; and although he sighed to relinquish so much gratification as his meeting with Harriet could not fail to produce, he did not flinch from his purpose of abandoning the expedition, which, however agreeable in its immediate results, might produce the eventual overthrow of all his future hopes.

Twigg was charmed to find his master so firm in his resolution, and having again urged the subject of the *billet doux*, succeeded at length in procuring from Saville such a note as must require, and would, in all probability, obtain an answer; the procuring which answer Twigg clearly foresaw would compel him to make another visit to the lodge, and so obtain another interview with his dearly-beloved Miss Johnstone. This note announced Saville's proximity to Harriet, and his unconquerable desire to say farewell, and hear one last adieu from her own sweet lips leaving to fate and Miss Johnstone the arrangement,—if it were practicable, and his adored girl would consent to it—of a melancholy yet painfully satisfactory interview, with which their acquaintance was to terminate.

It was not without much consideration, and some difficulty, that Saville prevailed upon himself to take this step; for although, as we have already stated, he was not yet sufficiently a man of the world to have adopted the doctrine of the agreeable and noble Mephistopheles, of "never writing a letter to a woman, nor ever destroying one which he had received," he felt a repugnance to address her, who although dearer to him than life, was actually the affianced bride of another. He had fancied himself into the belief that she was wretched and miserable, and forced to commit Smithism against her will; but perhaps, after all, he might be wrong. His *amour propre* certainly induced him to doubt whether a young lady of Harriet's standing and understanding, — for the bandage with which Cupid blinds the eyes of his votaries is long enough to tie over the ears, — could possibly prefer Smith, at sixty-four, to himself, at twenty-five; — but then she had sunk very tranquilly into her captivity and wretchedness. She had "died and made no sign." If she really were so persecuted, if she really hated the elderly gentleman, and, above all, if she really loved the young one, why had she given no evidence of her feelings to her disconsolate swain? She might have been too timid; she might have considered it indelicate; she might have fancied it undignified; well, and if she *had*, it was evident that the present attempt to persuade her into the decisive step of an elopement would be fruitless. Yet why? the offer would come from her suitor, whom at the very moment in which he was debating the question, she might consider as having tamely and quietly abandoned *her*; — to be sure she might; the letter in which, for the first time, he had openly declared himself, she had — thanks to the prudence of her mother — never received; so that both of the ardent, dying lovers might, for all that any body knew to the contrary, have been all this time sympathising in the desire to meet to part no more — either anxiously expecting the advance of the other.

The letter was therefore despatched. Twigg departed; Saville returned to the assembly-room, where more groups of fresh arrivals were breakfasting at different tables; the

wine-merchant's family, with which the stout gentleman with the crutches seemed to have formed an alliance offensive and defensive, now occupying the bay window next the street; the head of the clan being extraordinarily loud in his praises of the excellence of Chertsey bread, and the beauty of the butcher's daughter.

One by one, and two by two, did all these felicity-hunters take their departure: gigs, tilburies, coaches, and cabriolets, all were in motion; and before noon Saville found himself the sole tenant of the hostelry, save those indeed whose occupations detained them under its roof. The day was a dreary waste to look forward to; neither occupation nor amusement appeared upon the surface of the arid plain; all was flat and dry as a desert. He walked unconscious alike of the distance and the objects which he passed, until he had paced from his inn to the bridge, in one direction, and to the Rhododendron Walk, at St. Anne's Hill, in the other. Still was Twigg absent; he was, no doubt, occupying his time much more satisfactorily in the society of Miss Johnstone; the poor master was all alone, with "nobody by but himself," but it was not until gentle force had been used by the fair demoiselle, in order to get him clear of the house before the family returned from the races, that Twigg made his bow, and bent his way back towards Chertsey, where he arrived to report progress to Saville, just as the advanced guard of the cockneys was entering the town on their return from the sports.

The intelligence Twigg brought was of first-rate importance; and if detailed, as Saville was obliged to hear it, would occupy the greater part of this volume: it will luckily lose nothing by condensation.

It appeared from the evidence of Johnstone, that Miss Franklin had, during her brief residence in that neighbourhood, been extremely unwell; that disagreements, hitherto unknown, had taken place between her and her mother; that from the observations she had thought proper to make upon these very disagreeable differences to her maid, the maid fancied she had gathered enough of her young lady's inclinations on the subject to be assured that if Saville were

to propose an elopement, he would find her "nothing loth;" that the mine was all properly charged, and that nothing but the contact of the match was wanting to explode it; nay, it appeared from what the smart and intelligent *soubrette* hinted (coloured a little more highly, perhaps, by the anxious Twigg), that the only disheartening feeling which pervaded the young lady's bosom originated in the apprehension that the affection of her lover had undergone some serious deterioration, or that his zeal was not of a corresponding character with her own; for, as the reader already knows, Mrs. Franklin had carefully concealed from her daughter any mention of the letter which Saville had attempted to send, he may easily anticipate that she never told her of her subsequent interview with him, or of the scrape into which he had gotten himself in the ardour of his pursuit of her. As the most minute particulars of the affairs of a family are always circumstantially related by servants one to another, there can be no doubt that the news of the interview between Saville and Mrs. Franklin would have reached Miss Johnstone, but for the circumstance of the footman who was at the milliner's door having been discharged when his mistress left town the next day, and the coachman happening to be a "Job," who quitted his functions at the same period, resigning his temporary mistress's odious blue chariot to the care of posters, with which she hastened to Chertsey, her maid and her butler being the only permanent officers of her personal staff.

There can be no question as to the effect produced upon Charles's mind by the information retailed to him through the medium of the sanguine Twigg, who interlarded his detail with frequent eulogies of Miss Harriet's beauty, and goodness, and mildness, and sorrow, and affection for his master, convinced in his own mind that his own Dulcinea would not for a moment hesitate to follow the example of her mistress, and upon such excellent authority in the way of precedent, unite herself to the squire of the knight, upon whom the fair lady herself was willing to bestow her fair hand.

Saville saw but one course to pursue: it was true he had received no answer to his note; could receive none until

the next day; and it would be the height of folly to make preparations for flight until sanctioned at least by a gentle refusal on the part of his mistress; and, moreover, it was not practicable at the moment, because post horses, so essential in such cases, could not be procured. But he might have spared himself all the pain which these reflections momentarily caused him, inasmuch as there was a sequel to Twigg's history, which as yet he had not heard: — the whole party, Franklins, Smith, the aunt, and all, were going the very next morning to the Isle of Wight for a month, previous to the celebration of the marriage between the *young* folks.

This was conclusive; and Saville's anger with his man, for not having come to this deciding incident in the history at first, had nearly proved fatal to his further connection with Twigg; who, however, excused himself upon the plea of keeping up the interest, and expressing his conviction, that if his master had heard of their approaching departure, in the first instance, he would not have listened patiently to the developement of Miss Franklin's true love, evidence of which he believed himself most satisfactorily to have adduced.

Twigg, however, contrived to redeem himself in his master's good opinion, by making him understand that he had arranged to see Miss Johnstone early in the morning before the departure of the family, in order to receive from her whatever answer, if any, her young mistress might choose to send. This pacified Saville, who, however, declaring himself incapable of enduring another evening in the assembly-room, and another morning in the street, resolved to put himself into the stage-coach and return to town, where Twigg was to join him; Rattew undertaking to send back his carriage to the coach-maker's, the moment he had a pair of horses disengaged. Thus the first part of the expedition might have been considered a failure, if he had not anticipated such a reply from Miss Franklin as might, perhaps, have the effect of continuing the action, only changing the *venue*.

Under this arrangement Saville reached his lodgings in London the same evening, at which Twigg was to arrive the following afternoon.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTHING is read by a Protestant, especially a Protestant woman, with greater interest than the details connected with the ceremony of taking the veil. Pratt, an author of great merit in his day, but now nearly forgotten, was one of the earliest, if not the first, who, mingling fact with fiction, gave an account of the proceedings at one of these European suttees. Many other writers have followed in the same track, and none of them have failed to attract and engage the attention of the reader. No wonder; there is in the nature of the ceremony, in its details, in the occasion, in the consequences, something seriously touching; the lengthened processions moving slowly along the dimly-lighted aisles, the deep-toned organ, the swelling choir, the wafted incense, the weeping friends, the sympathising spectators,—all these accessories are sure to effect the object for which they are thus combined.

If such an immolation, then, be really matter of stirring interest, something better than indifference may be claimed for poor Harriet Franklin; true it is, that she was not destined to crop her hair, and, casting away her jewels with disdain, assume a veil; nor was she to be buried in a cell, with an iron bedstead and one chair, by way of furniture; nor was she absolutely to renounce the society of all her early friends and acquaintance; but it is equally true that she was about to be married to an elderly gentleman in despite of her feelings and inclinations, and give up one, who, as it appeared, was more to *her* than a crowd of worldly associates.

Those, and there are some, but in these days very few, who have not had the advantage of "foreign travel," and who have formed their notions of a conventual life upon what they have seen in the nunneries of Essex, Middlesex, or Warwickshire, can form but a very faint opinion of the continental establishments of a similar nature. In England, a few strange-looking old bodies in black gowns, with a plump confessor, "*bien poudré*," smart, smug, and smirking, huddled round the outside edge of a low-roofed par-

lour, with no high walls to bound their view, and no rigid ordinances to restrain their harmless conversation, look all mighty snug and comfortable; but far different is the position of the closely immured girl, who, compelled by the imperious commands of a bigoted parent, is doomed to eternal solitude and sorrow. It was to this last victim that poor Harriet bore the strongest resemblance; nor was the positive command of her mother to marry Smith less cruel — perhaps, taking all things into consideration, it was more so — than the decree which would consign the innocent novice to her premature grave.

Oh! it was sad to see the once lively, laughing Harriet, reduced, in so short a space of time, to melancholy and mourning, her rosy cheeks blanched and her bright eyes dim; and to watch the innocent attentions of her doting suitor, and listen to his observations and remarks. The man had from his youth been ignorant of all things, save in the particular of expertness in book-keeping by "double entry," and money-gathering by any entry through which it would come. Like Nelson on his quarter-deck, he was mighty in his counting-house, but, out of that sphere of action, he possessed every quality to justify the nickname which we have already mentioned was bestowed upon him, of Twaddle Smith.

He had, however, a fine house in a fine street, and he had fine pictures, for Seguier honoured him with his notice. He had a splendid library, for what is a merchant without his books? He had plate, and carriages, and horses, and wines; and, although on the stock-exchange, which is represented to the uninitiated as the mart of fun as well as of funds, he had been *be-twaddled* by general consent, yet in society, to which his golden key was as sure a passport as that of an Imperial chamberlain, he was called "a good creature" — "a well meaning, kind-hearted man," and, above all, "so very quiet and gentlemanly." He had, moreover, besides his actual wealth, another recommendation to the men of certain sets in which he mingled; he was remarkably fond of whist — played particularly ill — backed himself highly — and always paid his bets "prompt."

"My dear Harriet," said Mrs. Franklin to her daughter, only a day or two before the Ascot meeting, "I must insist upon your shaking off this sort of apathetic indifference to every thing around you, which you either feel or affect; what must Mr. Smith think of your gravity, and your sighs, and even tears, which, if he is not as blind as a beetle, he must occasionally see?"

"Can I command my feelings?" said her daughter. "I have in all things obeyed you; have met your wishes in direct opposition to my own. It is not in my power entirely to check the natural impulses of my heart."

"You ought to be the happiest girl in England."

"Would I could think so," said Harriet.

"You do not think so," replied her mother, "because you have established some romantic ideas in your mind, which the most favourable events could never realise. You have already rejected a viscount and a baronet, because you did not like them, and they did not suit ——"

"And surely, mamma," said Miss Franklin, interrupting her voluble and somewhat irritated parent, "there could have been no better reason, even were the fact as you have set it down. That I most certainly should not have accepted either Lord Pertwood or Sir Harry Fitch, is most true, supposing they had given me the opportunity of refusing them, but they never did me the honour of making me any offer that I heard of."

"Offer!" said Mrs. Franklin, "of course not; why should men propose with the certainty of being rejected? You took the greatest possible pains to display your sentiments towards both of them."

"I am not aware of that," said Harriet.

"*They* were," answered her mother. "A lover, however blind to every thing else, is peculiarly sensitive as to the manner of the lady to whom he is paying his addresses; the least taunt — a look — a word ——"

"Well, then," said Harriet, smiling, "if both these lovers of mine, as you call them, were driven away by my manner, — and I am unconscious of having done any thing which ought to displease them, — it only proves the sin-

cerity of my disposition, and the singleness of my character."

"Conscious, Harriet!" exclaimed Mrs. Franklin; "what earthly object had you in making a fool of young Saville, by devoting yourself to his conversation when they were present, listening to his singing, and poring over his drawings? You never could have had any serious view in such behaviour, unless to declare, in the most convincing manner, not only your indifference towards them, but your partiality for him."

"That, again," said Harriet, colouring a *little*, "proves my sincerity. It never struck me that I showed any special favour, or paid any particular attention to Mr. Saville. I dare say I did, if it appeared so to you, because I really felt the greatest pleasure in his society. I admired his talents, and I enjoyed his conversation; yet I think you must have been more observant of my partialities than he was; for, like the viscount and the baronet, whom you represent me to have *chasséed* for his sake, Mr. Saville made good his retreat upon the approach of a rival, and like them spared me — or rather you — the pain of a refusal."

"Me! my dear child," said the mother, feeling herself look confused and agitated by the consciousness that Saville had actually made a declaration and proposal, which she had intercepted and returned. "Me! not only me — but you; surely, however pleasant Mr. Saville may be as a companion or an acquaintance, he would be any thing but desirable as a connection. These talking, and drawing, and singing men are all mighty well in society, but a woman, in settling for life, wants something more than a pun, a pencil, and a piano-forte."

"And yet," said Harriet, shaking her head, and affecting to look judicially grave at her mother, "you — yes, you, my dear mother, married for love yourself, in defiance of my excellent and exemplary grandfather and grandmother."

"Ah!" answered Mrs. Franklin, rather staggered by the attack, "ah! that's quite another thing — where there is a powerful feeling of attachment — and — so — I ——"

"Spare yourself, my dear mother," said Harriet; "I presume neither to arraign your conduct, nor justify my own rebellion by your example. Whatever my feelings *were*, they are conquered; whatever my scruples, they are overcome; but they will still occasionally flash into my mind; and when the recollection of other days, and of the prospects which I thought those days presaged, occur, some few natural tears will fall, but they shall be dried. All that is wanting to reconcile me to what I know you think best for me, is time. The bitterest afflictions are conquered by time; and it will be hard if I, who am about to form a connection which, you tell me, is the envy of all my unmarried acquaintance, am not able to overcome regrets which I ought now most certainly not to cherish, and which, perhaps, after all, have been erroneously excited."

The truth is, that the grief and sorrow of Harriet were of a two-fold character: giving up Saville was one cause of wretchedness; marrying Smith was another and a greater one; but the most poignant of all was the belief that Charles had deceived, and then deserted her. He certainly, perhaps as unconsciously as herself, had taught her to fancy that he loved; and yet, from the instant that so questionable a rival as Smith appeared, he had withdrawn, without one effort to rescue her from that respectable dragon, and without having given her the option of refusing or accepting him. She little thought what Saville's sufferings had been; she could not guess at the cruel duplicity of her mother; she attributed his silence and absence either to neglect, or perhaps disgust, excited by what, if he thought at all about her, he must have considered her ready acceptance of her now intended husband.

She had accepted him; but it was a conditional acceptance: she had demanded time before she surrendered; that time elapsed, and no Saville appeared. The election was to be made; he still kept away; and, at the very moment when his efforts should have been the most energetic, he came not—wrote not—as she thought; and, actuated by the influence of her elderly lover, and the authority of her anxious parent, she arrived at the conclusion

which was eternally to separate her from the only man who had ever excited an interest or affection in her heart.

The *tête-à-tête* of Mrs. Franklin and her daughter was broken up by the arrival of Mr. Smith, who, in spite of all the dim-sightedness of age, occasionally caught a glimpse or two of his unpopularity in the family. To this he was magnanimously callous; it was his will and pleasure to have a young and handsome wife, and Harriet's mother was evidently disposed to gratify his inclination that way; upon him, therefore, any looks or sighs, or tears, even of his intended, however much they might convince him of her real feelings towards him, produced but little effect; he looked upon the whole affair as a transaction in which, for valuable considerations on either side, a bargain had been struck, and he went on making preparations for the marriage ceremony as he would for any other ordinary event.

The honeymoon, and five or six moons more, as he proposed, were to be passed in continental travelling. He had hitherto visited only France and Italy; and somebody had suggested that an extended excursion through Europe alone was wanting to complete his education; he therefore determined to see every thing that the Continent could show, as fast as he possibly could; and what would be pleasanter than pursuing his gratifying researches in the society of a young and accomplished wife. Harriet objected to nothing that was proposed, and even if she had made a choice, the excursion was rather preferable to remaining in the same scenes and the same society which she had enjoyed before her marriage. To *him*, such a companion was every thing; she spoke two or three of the continental languages fluently, of which he himself had not the slightest knowledge; these, in his capacity of guardian, he had made a point of her acquiring, and now felt the importance of reaping the harvest which himself had sown.

Little amusement and less information would be afforded to the reader by the details of conversations such as those in which the family party indulged during the sojourn at Chertsey. Mr. Smith had grown particularly good-tempered within the last few days, in consequence of having

let his house in London for six months, at a most advantageous rate. It would just suit for the time they were to be absent; and besides pocketing five-and-twenty guineas a week — which to a man of his extensive wealth was a matter of infinitely greater interest than it would have been to the less opulent Mrs. Franklin, or any body of her grade — the rooms would be kept aired, and the furniture in order till their return, and he might disband his domestic establishment, retaining only his own man, who with an ambi-dexterity highly valuable to an economist of Mr. Smith's disposition, performed the double character of valet and butler.

Smith always declared that more fortunes were saved than made; and although, perhaps, he had not, like some of his wealthy contemporaries, the prospect of the parish poor-house constantly before his eyes, he certainly appeared to take the most anxious precautions to avoid the possibility of outliving his income. Indeed, the evidences of his parsimonious character, which were discernible from the proceedings of the last fortnight of their acquaintance, had not tended to increase the affection of Harriet for her betrothed, however much they might have added to her respect for his prudence and forethought.

In this state were affairs when Harriet returned from Ascot Heath, tired and jaded, and worried, and even disappointed — disappointed too, because, although she had gazed and looked, and looked and gazed in every direction, she had not seen Charles Saville; having strangely, and even improperly, as her maiden aunt would have thought, anticipated that he would be there. Yet why? — if he knew where she was, he certainly would not seek that neighbourhood, after having so evidently relinquished all intention of bringing their ill-fated acquaintance to a happy conclusion; and if he knew nothing about her present residence, which was most probable, why should he visit Ascot? — Why should he not? — all the world went to Ascot; why not Charles Saville? All these questions Harriet had asked herself, and had answered them all, so as at the conclusion of the colloquy to have wound herself up into a hope that he might be there, and therefore, as

the reader must be told, *coute qui coute,* she came back disappointed that he was not.

This was not the sort of feeling which should have actuated a young lady within a month of her marriage to another man; but whether it were or were not, the reader may easily anticipate how a note from the regretted object which had excited it was received, and how awfully agreeable to the young bride elect was the sight of the hand-writing of the rejected lover, just at the moment of her enlightenment upon the subject of his feeling towards her, with the whole history of which she was at this juncture favoured by her maid. That she had now, for the first time, discovered that he *had been* rejected, diminished neither the pain which she derived from the intelligence, nor the vexation—it might almost be called anger—which was excited in her breast by the exposure of her mother's mistaken duplicity, as related to the suppression of his declaration and proposal.

Harriet, in the first instance, received Saville's *billet* from the all-accomplished Miss Johnstone, without knowing what it was, or whence it came; the experienced *soubrette* was too great an artist in her particular line, and understood her *metier* much too well to subject the question of opening a letter from Mr. Saville to Miss Franklin's discussion; she did not humanely warn her young lady of the trap that was set for her; and she knew enough of her sex to be quite assured that if her principle were once compromised, and the seal once broken, the letter would be read. It is necessary that the reader should be put into possession of this fact, in order that my heroine should be exempt from the reproach which many of the elderly Dianas of society would, no doubt, be inclined to cast upon her, for her want of delicacy — or, what they talk about quite as much, and think about, perhaps, a little more,— her want of dignity, in opening a note addressed to her by a faithless lover, as she supposed Charles to be; or indeed a lover of any sort, while she was actually under an engagement, and on the eve of bestowing herself upon another.

"Is it possible!" said Harriet, still holding the note

in her trembling hand, her heart palpitating rapidly, and her eyes filling with tears. "Can my mother have betrayed me so cruelly? Had the letter of which he speaks ever reached me, although it might have made no serious alteration in the resolution to which I came, of acting according to my mother's wishes, I should, at least, have had the merit of making a sacrifice to duty; and I should have done so with comparative happiness, if I had known that I had not lost the esteem of so dear a friend as Charles. But this I cannot bear! to be cheated into obedience, when I was ready to submit to all she wished; to be blinded, duped, and even taught, carefully taught, to banish Charles from my memory, not upon principle, but upon the low and petty feeling of retaliation — because he had forgotten *me*, is more than even I can endure."

"Why," added she, addressing her maid, who stood near at hand, to watch the working of the subtle poison which she had administered, "why did I not know this before? — why do I know it now?"

"Why, ma'am," said Johnstone, "I'm sure I never had the least suspicion of Mr. Saville's intentions, only what I could pick up from Mr. Twigg; and I'm sure, if you'll believe me, I thought I felt my heart up in my mouth when I saw him here this morning."

"I certainly should like to see Mr. Saville," said Harriet, "if it were only for five minutes, to exculpate myself from the imputation of heartlessness, of which he must so naturally consider me guilty."

"Why, yes, Miss," said Johnstone, "that's very natural; but don't you think he deserves something more than a mere farewell?"

"How do you mean?" said Harriet.

"Why, Miss," replied Johnstone, "I mean — nothing particular — only that I don't think if *I* were *you* I should have the heart to send him away."

"I don't comprehend," said the young lady, "I don't in the least comprehend what you would do. To-morrow-morning we leave this for the Isle of Wight, and this day month is fixed for my marriage."

"Why, certainly, Miss," said Johnstone, "as to the

Isle of Wight, and the journey to-morrow, there is no getting off those; but for the marriage, I am sure if I had such a sweetheart as Mr. Saville, ready to fly to my arms, I could not make up my mind to give him up for such an old ——"

"Pray be quiet, Johnstone," interrupted her young lady, "recollect that I *have* made up my mind."

"But why, Miss?" said the maid. "You have made up your mind to marry Mr. Smith, half out of spite, because you thought Mr. Saville had behaved ungenteelly; and now here, poor dear gentleman, he tells you all the truth. I am sure, if I were you, I would take my mind to pieces again, as I had made it up, and show them the difference."

"How?"

"How?" said Johnstone, "leave me alone for settling *that*; — why, by giving the slip, and running away."

"Good heavens! what a suggestion!" said Harriet — not, however, in so angry a tone as some people might have expected — "What could have put such a thing into your head?"

"Why, Miss, I believe," replied Johnstone, "it was your telling me that your Mamma ran away with her first husband, and ——"

"Ay — yes," said Harriet, "so she did."

"And to avoid a match she disliked, I think you said."

"True — but then ——"

"What, Miss?

"Nobody can be more convinced of the rashness, and indelicacy, and imprudence of such an act, than Mamma herself."

"Ay," said Johnstone, "it is part of her duty as a parent to say so, but don't the best books tell us that practice is before precept, and better than preaching; — she would not be seriously angry for long."

"Her case, if you mean that," said Harriet, "was totally different from mine. But why do I permit myself to entertain such a subject for a moment?"

"Because you cannot help it, Miss."

"But I *will* help it, Johnstone; am I not pledged?"

"If it is merely a question of time, Miss," said Johnstone, "I don't think it signifies the value of an old gown. Do you love Mr. Smith?"

"No," said Harriet, sharply, "not as I ought."

"Why marry him?"

"My mother wishes it — desires it — orders it — and I have consented."

"Her mother wished *her* to marry a man she did not love; and desired it — and ordered it — and what did she do?" said Johnstone, "jumped out of a one pair of stairs window, and ran away with the man she *did* love."

"As I shall most assuredly *not* do," said Harriet; "my word is given, my faith is plighted."

"And when you gave your word and plighted your faith," said Johnstone; "did you or did you not believe that Mr. Saville had given you up?"

Harriet sighed.

"And who made you think so, Miss, but your Ma?" continued the maid. "She it was that took Mr. Saville's offer of his hand and heart, and crumpled it up and poked it into her bag, and never said a word about it to you — good, bad, or indifferent."

"That *is* true," said Harriet.

"Well, then, I am sure," said Johnstone, "that one single thing puts an end to all obligations from you to your Ma. What I says is this — trust me, and I'll never deceive you — play me false, and I'll show you I am as good as my neighbour at the game."

"I conclude my mother thought it best to conceal the offer from me," said Harriet.

"Well, then, Miss, if she thought it best to conceal the offer from you, it shows she must know you don't like the old fogey."

"Johnstone," said Miss Franklin, "do you recollect of whom you speak?"

"I do, Miss; of a very worthy old gentleman, with a very good fortune, of which he is extremely fond and vain; but no more fit for your husband——"

"Come," said Harriet, "end these remarks; even if I could properly or correctly listen to such language, I

have no time: I am waited for in the drawing-room, so tell me at once, is Mr. Saville's servant gone?"

"He is, but he will be here again before any body is stirring in the morning. I have promised your answer."

"I can send no answer," said Harriet. "What could I say?"

"Very little will do — of *that,* I am quite sure," said Johnstone; "do not forbid him to hope — let him see you once."

"But even if I *did* wish to see him," said Harriet, thoughtfully, "I could not."

The moment Harriet uttered these words, the acute Johnstone felt that she had triumphed; the main objection was overcome. The seeing or not seeing him ceased now to be a matter of principle, and had resolved itself into a question of time, and — which seemed still more difficult — opportunity.

"Oh! Miss," said Johnstone, "I'll answer for your being able to see Mr. Saville; we are to be a month at the Isle of Wight — where is the difficulty?"

"No," said Harriet; "I dare say the difficulty might be overcome — but — no, no — it is impossible — there would be such duplicity in it. What on earth should I do if my mother were to speak of him, or allude to him, and I felt conscious that I had seen him since she had?"

"If things turn out as I hope, Miss," said Johnstone, "I don't think you would see much of your Ma after you had seen Mr. Saville, until you appeared before her with him as your husband."

"Oh! ridiculous," said Miss Franklin; "as if it were possible to break off with Mr. Smith, even if I desired it; every thing is prepared for the marriage and for our journey afterwards; my clothes and jewels are all ordered and nearly ready."

"What signifies, Miss?" said Johnstone; "Mr. Smith is too good a manager to lose by that; besides, if he had the generosity of a gentleman, when he found you had married the man of your choice, he would make you a present of all the wedding-clothes; and as for the jewels

— pooh — what is the value of a long suit of diamonds in a game where hearts are trumps?"

"Rely upon it, Johnstone," said Harriet, "that I am not actuated by any great envy of wealth in this connection they did not catch me as they do birds, by dazzling. I can see plainly and clearly, and I know I shall be miserable for the rest of my life, as well as any of the indifferent lookers on; but my pride was hurt by Charles's apparent negligence; his silence left me no defence for what I could not have considered any thing short of disobedience; and mingled duty and resentment, I am ashamed to say, led me to consent."

"Well then, Miss," said Johnstone, "since your Ma has so bitterly deceived you, you should let resentment lead you to fulfil your first intention, and reward the ill-used, constant Mr. Saville with your hand."

"I tell you it is nonsense to talk of such a thing," said Harriet; "the idea of running away with one lover a month before my proposed marriage to another!"

"Better by half do that, Miss," said Johnstone, "than run away a month after, which I'm sure you'll just be ready to do if you ——"

Here a knocking at the dressing-room door attracted Miss Johnstone's attention; it proved to be the summons of the domestic black-rod to coffee, which was announced to be ready; and Harriet hurried down stairs, not, however, without promising Johnstone that she should have some decisive answer for the enterprising Twigg on his arrival in the morning.

Johnstone, who was an adept in what in better society is called *finesse*, but who, spite of all her overstrained education and fine language, got credit for nothing better than cunning, congratulated herself, not without reason, upon the tone she had assumed, and the line she had adopted, in pleading the cause of Saville with her young lady. She found her unassailable where mere self-gratification, at the expense either of her "dignity," or her filial duty, was the object; these she had resolved to support and maintain, even to the annihilation of all her best and dearest hopes

of future happiness; but the moment the pleader made her sensible that she had been cheated into compliance with her mother's wishes by a trick, by the suppression of a confidential communication, the case was altered: not only did she then feel that she had been treated like a child, and duped and trifled with, but she recalled to her mind all that she imagined Charles must have felt regarding her apparent contemptuous neglect of him; for she was of course not aware that her mother had herself confessed to him her interception of his letter, and the concealment of its contents. Johnstone, in truth, had piqued her — wounded her pride, and excited a spirit, which, during the wakeful restlessness of the night, prompted her — not to write to Saville, but to do — what, in fact, if less indelicate, was assuredly more dangerous — permit *her* maid to enter into such a negociation with *his* man, as might produce an interview between them previous to her marriage, in which she might vindicate her own conduct, and bid farewell for ever to a being, of whose importance to her happiness she had no just idea until she had been deprived of his society.

The delegation of power to weak or vulgar minds is at all times perilous and imprudent. The necessities of society, which invest the tax-gatherer or the toll-taker with personal authority, are great and flagrant evils, the obvious results of which are impertinence of manner, coarseness of language, and an unqualified disposition to tyrannise. It is recorded somewhere, that an eminent brewer, now no more, finding himself universally despised in all companies with which he mingled, his facts doubted, his arguments refuted, his opinions ridiculed, and his capacity questioned, enjoyed a pleasurable counterpoise for the miseries of his insignificance, in walking forth into the yard of his brewhouse, and kicking the pigs that were feeding on the grains. It was a triumph to his little mind to tyrannise over something that had breath and life. Harriet, when she appointed Johnstone her minister plenipotentiary and extraordinary — extraordinary indeed! did not foresee the vast accumulation of power which she surrendered by so doing. That her scruples about writing were just and

proper, no one can for a moment doubt; but it is questionable whether the justice and propriety of her resolutions upon that point were not altogether compromised by the equivocal course she had actually chosen to adopt. The qualification of the sin of writing by the weakness of a personal communication, is not very unlike the contemptible distinction made by a well-known puritanical parson, between the delicacy of a young lady who sang with her back to the company, and the impropriety of her who did the same thing, facing it.

So it was, however; and there could be little doubt that in the matinal meeting between Twigg and the fair object of all his hopes and anxieties, enough was said by the amiable *diplomate*, to justify the conclusions at which her companion very speedily arrived.

The reader may easily picture to himself the feverish state of anxiety in which Charles Saville remained in London, until the arrival of his minister, by whose hand he expected such important despatches. He lived, however, to be disappointed in that particular, but gratified by the appearance of the faithful Twigg, who reached town just about the period at which the Isle of Wight travellers were eating their luncheon, at the sign of many quarterings, at Murrell Green.

"Well!" exclaimed Saville, as he entered the room, "what answer?"

"None, sir," said Twigg.

"Not a line?"

"Not a scratch."

"Are they gone?"

"Gone, sir," said Twigg.

"And no answer to my note?"

"No; miss would not write, sir," said Twigg.

"That's strange!" said Saville.

"Very, sir," said Twigg; "I wish you had been there this morning, instead of here."

"Why?"

"Because Miss Franklin would have seen you, sir."

"How do you know?"

"She said so."

"That," said Saville, "is tolerably good authority."

"Very, sir."

"Did you see her?"

"No," said Twigg; "but Miss Johnstone told me all about it — that her young lady would not write; she said she could not write — that I s'pose is her way of excusing herself — she said she could not write, but if ——"

"What?"

"If you choose to go down quietly to Cowes, where they are to stay, she will endeavour to see you, and bid you good-bye."

"And is that all?" said Saville; "meet to part — that's sad work."

"Very, sir," said Twigg; "but I have a notion that if you mind your P's and Q's, as I mean to mind mine with Miss J. — that is, with your permission, sir — you need not part at all. I think, from all I know, that the day is your own; and that even now she would take a long run to get away from Smith."

"What! at the eleventh hour?" said Saville.

"Why," replied Twigg, "we have not come to sich close calcilations as to fix the hour yet, but very nigh it, sir. She'll go."

"Do you really believe so?" said Saville.

"I do, sir," said the servant, "and she has said as much. You can't expect a horse to come to corn without shaking the sieve a bit; and I reckon she may want a bit of pressing; or rather I should say encouraging — she can't bear the old one, and is dying for love of you."

"Is this the opinion of Miss Johnstone?" said Saville.

"She knows it, sir; she is her considerate in the whole affair."

"Confederate?"

"Yes, sir, all the same, that's it," said Twigg; "and she commissioned her to commission me to make the same known to you in any way I thought most properest."

"That is good news, Twigg."

"Very, sir," replied Twigg; "and so I took the liberty of meeting Miss Johnstone half-way in the matter

of arrangements; for as Miss Franklin had appointed her minister penitentiary on one side, I thought it was right for me to appoint myself minister penitentiary on the other."

"You seem to have a very just idea, Twigg," said Saville, "of the dignity of your principal; I suppose you picked up this quality in the service of your late master?"

"I got a smattering there, sir," said Twigg, looking rather shy; "one ought, you know, sir, to live and learn; and no better school, of course, than a cabinet minister's stable. I assure you, sir, though I say it, my lord, more than once, when he's been a looking at the horses, afore he went down to Downing Street, has asked me what I thought of things in Portugal, and Turkey, and them sort of outlandish places, and regular as could be I've noticed in the newspapers that he did whatsumever I advised."

"I delight in your adroitness — go on."

"So I fixed, sir," said Twigg, "that we should go down upon the sly to Portsmouth, in two or three days; put ourselves up at the Quebec Hotel, where nobody will see us; pop over in the Ryde steamer in the afternoon, and so reach Cowes in the dusk. The time Miss will meet you will be when she goes out in the morning as if she was going to bathe, and takes Johnstone along with her. Miss J. and I have settled where she is to turn off up the hill towards Northwood, and, for that morning, take a stroll instead of a dip. You will have half an hour for conversation; and I and Miss J. will play propriety, and, like good seconds, follow the example of our principals."

"The notion is good," said Saville, "and practicable."

"Very, sir," said Twigg; "I know every inch of my ground, and I'll answer for the ease, safety, and security of the meeting — the rest I must leave to you."

"You have done wonders, Twigg," said Saville, "and when shall we go?"

"Oh, the sooner the better, sir," said Twigg, "I cannot bear to think of the poor young lady's sufferings under the courtship of that old fogey, as Miss J. calls him:

I saw him out on one of the gravel walks this very morning, when he little thought who was so near him, trying all he could to make himself insinivating, sir. It's quite shocking to look at."

"It is an intricate web in which she has got entangled," said Saville.

"Very," said Twigg; "and to keep up the meteor, as my lord used to say, old Smith is the spider what paws and mumbles her, just like an innocent fly—and I'm sure she'll die of him, just like the fly, if we don't rescue her."

"But, Twigg," said Saville, "I see no encouragement to hope for more than this transient meeting; there hint — no allusion — nothing prospective as to her going off."

"Never you mind, sir," said Twigg; "you can't expect a young lady to jump down your throat, if you won't open your mouth. She's in love with you, and hates Smith, — that's one good thing; she's unhappy where she is, and would be happy with you, — that's another good thing; but the best thing of all is, that she is as savage as can be with her Ma, as she calls her; and Miss J. has put it into her head that turn-about is all fair play, and that as Ma cheated *her*, she may cheat Ma, and so play tit for tat without committing the slightest impropriety."

"It matters little, as far as our visit is concerned," said Saville, "what may be our ulterior proceeding; we will not lose a moment in preparing for our expedition to Portsmouth. How are we to go?"

"Per Rocket, sir," said Twigg; "'Faulkner's four'— that's the surest way — steady pace — up hill and down hill, and round the Devil's Punch Bowl all at the same pat."

"Well, all the arrangements I leave to you; and the day after to-morrow we go."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Twigg; "rely upon me; you have not another word to say, nor another order to give till you find yourself in the bow-window of the Queebec."

"Why there?"

"Close to the packets, and away from every thing else,

sir," said Twigg; "and if we should have to sleep there, you won't mind for one night, whether the beds are——"

"Oh, not I," said Saville, "you have your reasons,—no doubt they are good, so do exactly as you please."

With these extensive instructions, Twigg, who saw in the approaching elopement of Harriet Franklin with his master, the precedent and gratification of his own union with "Miss J.," departed to make the requisite preparations for the start, leaving Charles overwhelmed by a multitude of conflicting hopes and fears, doubts and distresses.

Amongst the gloomy feelings which afflicted him, few were more remorseful than those excited by the recollection of the base injustice of which he had been guilty towards the character and attributes of his adored Harriet, in fancying it possible — even in the haste and blindness of love — that she could have been the contriver of a Portland-place assignation, and the authoress of the note suggesting their meeting. She, the sensitive, delicate girl, who now, at a moment when her happiness or misery was depending; when her feelings were harassed, and her indignation roused, could not prevail upon herself to write one line to the man for whom she admitted the warmest esteem, and upon whom, consequently, she must have the most implicit reliance. But it was now no time to reflect upon former indescretions, or by-gone follies; the future alone was to be looked to. He was about to incur, if she granted his prayer, the weighty responsibility from which he had before felt it a duty to shrink; he was on the eve of inducing an innocent girl to take a step, her mother's opinion of which he already knew; he was about to withdraw her from competence and comfort, to partake of his hazardous and precarious means of existence. But what of that?—they loved; and as she had already expressed her detestation of a marriage made for money, it was not unreasonable to expect that she had made up her mind to the extreme alternative of taking a husband who had none.

It was in vain that Saville endeavoured to collect and concentrate his scattered thoughts during a long day and evening in the society of his exemplary friend Alving-

ham, and the family of his betrothed: his absence of manner, his unconsciousness of passing events, were noticed, and even joked upon, by his better-fated companion; but neither malice nor jest could provoke or entice him into a second confidence with the young priest, for whose want of sentiment and unqualified happiness at that period he felt the most sovereign contempt. It may appear that such a feeling was a somewhat extraordinary return for the kindness and hospitality which Alvingham had uniformly exhibited towards him; but as every body knows, with a man in love all absurdities are reconciled, antipathies are transformed into affinities, extremes meet, and opposites assimilate. Saville, who had, on his first introduction to the Simpsons, been considered by the whole family as extremely agreeable, was nevertheless pronounced a bore; and the question heretofore so cordially asked, of "When shall we see you again?" was purposely omitted by the head of the family, in the ceremonial of parting. Saville did not notice the omission, which shared the fate of every thing not immediately connected with the expedition he was about to undertake, and returned to town to pass the next day in completing all the preparations necessary for its execution.

CHAPTER VIII.

BRIGHT beamed the morning of Saville's start to Portsmouth; and fortunate would it be for me were the scene of his departure more romantic than truth compels me to admit that it was. There is nothing to be found in strict accordance with the feelings of a love-sick heart at the door of the Gloucester Coffee House, in Piccadilly, nor any sound responsive to the plaintive sigh, in the hoarse bawling of the porters, or the more eloquent appeals of the canvassing cads of the short stages, borne on the eastern breezes from the neighbouring White Horse Cellar.

Twigg had arranged every thing so that his master should have neither need of trouble nor time for delibera-

tion. He had booked him for the inside, not because he considered it the more convenient or pleasant position, but because he anticipated that his own disposition for research, and talent for conversation, might be in some degree restrained by the presence of his immediate superior on the roof. To those who are regardless of dust, rain, and heat, and to whom broken legs and arms are every day incidents, the outside of a coach is, no doubt, more agreeable than the inside; but to those who were born when the insides of carriages were considered the better places, and in which a man is secured against the sudden and frequent changes of our extraordinary climate, the right-hand corner facing the horses seems to be no uncomfortable position. In such a corner was Saville deposited, when the Rocket darted forwards on the high road to Portsmouth.

And what road is fuller of interest to thousands of our fellow-subjects. It is one of the great paths of our nation which leads the anxious merchant to his foreign store, the seaman to his fearful trade, and on which the devoted lover journeys from his anxious mistress, and the faithful husband from his constant wife. Along that road has many a noble soldier travelled, to whom there has been no return; along that road the British sailor has often sped to victory or death. It does not strike the ordinary run of admirers of well-appointed public carriages, who stand and praise the neat "turn out," and the "well-bred cattle" of these Portsmouth coaches, what interest for others hangs upon their wheels; nor as they roll along the level ground, does the casual observer think what feelings, what hopes, what fears, what doubts, what anticipations, and what regrets, are pent within their pannels.

In the coach with Saville were three other passengers—the full allowance: two were friends; the third, like Saville himself, was an independent, isolated traveller. What he was, or what the object of his journey, of course remained within his own bosom. Of the other two, one was a partner in a mercantile house at the Cape of Good Hope, where he never had been, and the other, one who had recently arrived from that fine colony, and had succeeded in persuading his companion to go out, as Southey

says the Devil did, when he visited his "snug little farm, the earth," in order —

"to see how his stock went on."

The experienced voyager, the active speculator, was all alive and in excellent spirits,—full of jest, and glee, and gaiety; to him the trees looked green and the sun shone bright, and not a word could be spoken, nor an incident occur, that he did not turn to jest and merriment. Not so his companion: he was grave and pale; and, July as it was, wore tight blue worsted pantaloons and Hessian boots. He spoke little, but sighed much; complained of the heat in murmured accents, and, for want of other conversation, augured rain and thunder; — he dozed a little, and then needlessly apologised to his companions for what he thought unseemly conduct, by telling them that he had been married eleven years; that he had never been apart from his wife and children one whole day since his marriage; and that he had, at the persuasion of his excellent friend, resolved to undertake a voyage to Africa, upon business, although he had never before been at sea, or even beheld it, except from the Steyne at Brighton, or the Pier at Margate. "I slept little last night," said he; "I am not used to partings, and it has been a sad morning for *me*, gentlemen."

The appeal was uncalled for; but having been made, it was received by the stranger travellers with courtesy and sympathy; it was met with a horse laugh by his friend, who, being a bachelor on his return to what he had established as his home in Cape Town, wondered how any man could be so silly as to waste a thought or a sigh upon an affectionate spouse and seven children, and a country like England, when he was travelling at the rate of ten miles an hour towards Africa and the detection of a pilfering partner.

Charles's feelings were just in a fit state to sympathise with this "parted husband," but even his commiseration seemed light by comparison with that of the fourth passenger, whose melancholy appeared to increase with the distance from London. To Saville, the general disposition to

silence (with the exception of the Cape Town Winkle-keeper) was particularly agreeable; and while his eyes remained unconsciously fixed upon the houses and hedges that seemed to dance by the rapidly-moving coach, his thoughts remained fixed upon Harriet, while amidst the measured rumble of the wheels, he fancied he could trace the melody of the air "she loved so much to sing."

After a transient refreshment, the party seemed more familiarised to each other, and even Saville himself condescended from his stilts and joined in the conversation; the melancholy man in the left-hand corner unbent his brow, and added his mite to the verbal contribution of his companions, till at length the subject of lotteries was started by the Winkle-keeper, who declared an opinion that nobody ever got a prize.

This statement was stoutly contradicted by the melancholy man, who seemed to derive a vast reinforcement of animation from the subject: he enumerated dukes, members of parliament, Hampshire squires, Bloomsbury attorneys, and Pall Mall pastry-cooks, who had, all to his own knowledge, been splendidly and suddenly enriched by the acquisition of large sums. Indeed, sir," added he, "even I myself might have been worth thirty thousand pounds more than I am at this moment, by the same means, if it had not been for an accidental circumstance, over which I had no control."

"What might that have been?" said the Winkleman, —"choosing the wrong number, perhaps?"

"Not so, sir," said the melancholy gentleman, his countenance at the same moment assuming an expression rather of "anger than of sorrow,"—I did choose the right number—bought it—brought it home—and had it in my library table drawer—but——"

"It was stolen, perhaps, sir?" said the Winkleman's friend, in a piteous tone.

"No, sir, not that. I had it—it was mine—it was in the days when lotteries lasted a month, and tickets rose in value as they continued undrawn. I went into the city on business—a friend, who knew of my ticket, called in my absence—offered my wife a hundred and twenty

guineas for it; — she knew that it had cost me but five-and-twenty; — sold it him — all for my good, poor soul — she's in heaven now, sir — it's no use scolding about it — it wo'n't bring it back — and the very same afternoon — d——n me — I'm sure you'll excuse my swearing at the recollection — it came up a thirty thousand pound prize!"

A general exclamation of horror followed the announcement.

"And now, sir," continued the gentleman, "as I walk along the streets in wet weather, because I cannot afford a hackney-coach, my friend Dodman, the lucky purchaser, dashes by in his carriage, and splashes me with mud. He lives in the house which I had all my life an anxiety to possess; and has refused his consent to his son's marrying my daughter on the plea of her poverty."

It was evident that the melancholy gentleman felt the circumstances keenly.

"Well," said Saville, "I don't think I could have survived such a thing."

"Only conceive, sir," said the gentleman, seeming to delight in aggravating all the miseries of his loss, — "only conceive my coming home out of the city — having seen my number placarded at Cornhill as the prize — having compared it with the memorandum in my pocket-book — having bought a necklace and pair of earrings for my wife upon the strength of it — and finding, upon my arrival, that she had sold my thirty thousand pounds, which I was sure was in my pocket, to a man I hated, for one hundred and twenty guineas, which she exultingly exhibited, and which, with thirty-five more, went to pay for the baubles I had brought her home."

"I could not have stood that," said the Winkleman.

"Nor I," said the weeping husband.

"I," said Saville, "should have cut my throat."

"So I did, sir!" said the melancholy gentleman, "and here are the marks where it was sewn up!" — exhibiting at the same moment, a huge scar right across his windpipe.

To describe the sudden coil-up of the three listeners, when the narrator of his own misfortunes made this disclosure, would be impossible; — in a moment they unani-

mously construed all his previous observations and remarks into symptoms of his yet latent malady; and never were rightly at their ease until they were blessed with the sight of his back, as he descended the steps of the coach at the door of the Dolphin, at Petersfield.

The occurrence of this circumstance was a great relief to Saville, as it furnished ample conversation for his two fellow-travellers to the end of the journey, which was accomplished with ease and punctuality, and terminated about half-past four in the centre of a labyrinth of dirty courts and blind alleys, of which the Quebec — (or Queebec, as Twigg called it) — is the Minotaur. In an instant, the coach was surrounded by crowds of the amphibious animals thereabouts indigenous — each vying with the other to haul out our desponding lover, and ship him forthwith by the Ryde Packet, whose tall chimney gave black and certain evidence of her readiness to start.

"How are you, Master Falkener?" said a man who made his appearance at the tavern door, his face flushed with the heat of the weather, and of some powerful potation, which he had just swallowed, with a view to cool himself — "I say, did you meet that ere new hopposition?"

"Yes," said Falkener, "passed her just t'other side Godalming."

"All safe?"

"I suppose so," said Falkener; "I did not ask. Why not?"

"Vy, only yesterday," said the other, "she had a reg'lar upset coming round the corner by Horndean — twelve outsides damaged, more or less — all sprawling in the middle of the road."

"Oh," said a horsekeeper, who was standing by, "that ere's nothing: he's got so much custom, that he can't count his passengers without spreading them."

This bit of humour had its effect: it was received with a shout of laughter by the landsmen, and taken into serious consideration by the boatmen, who (their technicalities lying in another direction) did not at once see the merit of the jest.

During this brief interchange of words, Saville had extricated himself from the stage-coach, and was preparing to accept the invitation of some of the mermen around him to embark; but Twigg interposed his authority, and informed his pliant master, that he could not permit him to start until he had visited the Post-Office, in order to get the instructions which he expected from "Miss J.," and begged him to go into the house, and wait his return.

To Saville's eye, the Queebec did not present exactly the appearance which Twigg's previous description and praise had led him to expect: — the red-curtained bar — the sanded passage — the larder, lined with Dutch tiles, containing half a yellow cold fowl, dotted with black stumps of feathers, a dry bone of beef, two purple kidneys, and a brace and a half of limp whitings — the narrow coffee-room, redolent with the fumes of rum and tobacco, with a hot waiter in his shirt-sleeves standing at the entrance, — these were the leading landmarks of the place, with nothing to redeem them, except a pretty, smart-looking young woman in the landlady's parlour, and at this juncture of Saville's life, as one woman alone engrossed all his cares and consideration, *her* charms were literally thrown away.

Here, however, spite of his prejudices, Saville was ordered by his Leporello to remain concealed until his return. His portmanteau, bags, &c. were all put "just inside the bar," while he, the disconsolate, lingered about, "just outside of the door," unwilling altogether to abandon the hope that he might not be compelled eventually to enter it; wholly unaware of the danger in which he was placing the fate of his expedition by so doing, seeing that the very position he occupied, however obscure in point of situation, was open to the observation of every individual embarking or disembarking for or from the Isle of Wight, and utterly unsuspicious that within half an hour his beloved Harriet and her bridegroom elect, with all the family party, would actually pass by it, for the purpose of returning to Ryde, whence it appeared they had that day come on a visit to Portsmouth.

"It's a good thing, sir," said Twigg, who returned in breathless haste, "that I went to the Post-Office as I did.

Miss J. writes to let me know, that her folks were all to go to Ryde to-day, and come over here to see the dock-yard, and the deuce knows what, and return to Cowes in the evening. A hundred to one if we hadn't popped upon 'em in the packet; and even now, sir,—do get into the house, and——"

"But when are we to go?"

"Not till the morning, with any safety, sir," said Twigg;—"get into the house, sir, and don't come out of it till after dark, at any rate."

"It was lucky, indeed," said Saville, implicitly obeying the mandate of his minister, and turning round to ascend the steps of the Queebec, "that you thought of going to look for a letter."

"Very, sir," said Twigg. "Oh, I knew 'Miss J.' wouldn't be idle — she has every thing at stake——"

"I am aware of that, Twigg," replied Charles, not a little amused at his self-satisfaction.

In compliance with Twigg's instructions, a private room was secured — if that, which in shape and size resembled a cocked hat-box, might be called a room — wherein he was to dine and sit after his dinner, which Twigg also ordered. Twigg, moreover, selected the bed-room, which was immediately over the sitting-room, and adjoining the official window of the Custom House, which commands the entrance of the harbour.

To Saville, the view to which the little window of his little den gave admission was delightful, and compensated for all the inconveniences of the apartment itself, and the noisy nuisance of a group of little children, playing on the beach immediately beneath. There he beheld — some in commission, and some in ordinary — various of his majesty's ships, whose names were not unknown to fame; and there, in the centre, distinguished by the banner of St. George, which floated at her maintop-gallant-mast head, rode the Queen Charlotte.

If this huge floating citadel possessed not the fatal interest of the Victory, it was impossible to look at her, majestically resting upon the unruffled surface of a peaceful harbour, and not think upon the places she had occupied

in other days; or not to contrast the still and tranquil scenery around her with the blazing batteries of Algiers, within a hundred yards of which, the gallant Exmouth led her to the terrific work of glory. She seemed like a giant reposing, and yet extending protection to all around her.

It is when the mind is softened by affliction, or excited by hopes and fears, such as agitated Saville at this moment, that the heart is most susceptible to the impressions which such objects cannot fail to make. He saw her, in imagination, dealing death and destruction on every side; her huge artillery roaring like thunder, responsive to her deadly-freighted lightning; her decks wet with the blood of heroes, her tall masts veiled in clouds of smoke; and towering above all, at once the beacon and the guide of thousands, floated the blood-red cross, the banner of our country — the symbol of her faith.

"They are off, sir, — they are off!" said Twigg, rushing into the room, and destroying at one fell swoop the whole airy fabric of Saville's fancy.

"Who — the Algerines?" said Charles.

"No, sir," said Twigg, "the Franklins."

"Off — where?"

"In the packet, sir," said Twigg; "for the island. I was close to them at the corner of the baths. There was Mrs. Franklin leaning upon the arm of that Colonel O'Lollocky, as he calls himself, that used to come to Harley Street, a twisting and a shaking herself about, just like a girl of fifteen, and pointing her toes, and in her Tooting assembly, appearing for all the world younger than Harriet——"

"Than whom, sir?"

"I beg pardon, sir," said Twigg, "Miss F.: we always — that is, Miss Johnstone and I — *enter nows* — always calls her Harriet, and sometimes Harr.; but we mean no harm, sir; its only for shortness, as I call Miss Johnstone herself Nancy for Anne."

"Rather impertinent, I think," said Saville.

"Very, sir," said Twigg.

"Well, and Miss Franklin was——"

"Walking with Old S.," said Twigg: "he carrying her parasol, and talking some of his unintelligible stuff; and she, poor dear, her head a constantly going round and round, first this way and then that way; in my belief, a looking to see if she could see any thing of us; and you know, sir, for young women as likes to look about 'em, them poke bonnets is old nick."

"Ah!" said Saville.

"There was a young creechur came down outside to-day," said Twigg; "a going governess to some gentleman's children in the island. She seemed uncommon pretty, and sociable, too; but I could not get to see much of her countenance, on account of her unmerciful large bonnet; and, as for conversation, it spoiled it completely; for, as she had not room to turn round, all she said inside her poke —as I call 'em — sounded to me not a bit more distincter than so much wind down a chimley."

"And was Miss Franklin the elder of the party?" said Saville.

"Yes, sir, she came last," said Twigg, "with a tall moon-faced girl, with a straw bonnet and green ribands, which I takes to be a Miss Macpherson, a friend of theirs, who I knew was to come down with them for the benefit of washing."

"And they did not see you?"

"Me," said Twigg, "no: I'm too good a judge for that. And now, sir, if you have finished your dinner, I'll let you out for a walk, on the lines, or in High Street, or where you will."

"I have no desire for such a luxury; I prefer sitting here," said Saville.

"Here, sir," said Twigg; "what, looking at that great ship in the middle of the pond? You'll be moped to death here — up in the street there are capital shops, and a nice pavement — you might almost fancy yourself in London."

"I have no great anxiety," said Charles, "to conjure up any such a delusion; I prefer the ship and the pond to the shops and the pavement."

Twigg retired, wondering at his master's bad taste; yet,

so deeply commiserating his melancholy position, as to desire the landlady to send him some books to wile away time; and accordingly, with the Ladies' Magazine, the Percy Anecdotes, Paul and Virginia, and a small collection of Tracts, diversified with occasional slumbers, Saville got through the dark hours, by the aid of a couple of mutton candles, till it was time to go to bed.

The sun had set redly, but the clouds looked wild, and as the evening closed in, sharp and sudden puffs of wind shook the windows of the Quebec; towards midnight those puffs increased, until before one it had actually begun to blow a gale. Saville's thoughts, his position, the natural anxiety of his mind, contributed to keep him awake, and it was not until the sun had again shown himself through the dirty white dimity curtains of his ricketty tent-bed, that our hero felt inclined to sleep.

At length he was conscious of the welcome symptoms of drowsiness, and laying his head on his pillow, was roused suddenly by the throwing up of a creaking window close to his ear; he listened, not at all certain what next was to happen, when a stentorian voice bawled out —

"Brig, a-hoy! What brig is that?"

The answer was inaudible.

"Where are you from?"

Still the answer was unheard.

"What's the name of your master?"

Ditto, as to inaudibility.

"What have you got in?"

Another answer, and down went the window.

Ah! thought Saville, settling himself again, now that's a fancy — a passion — some man has got out of his bed to inquire about a brig coming into the harbour — perhaps he has a fond, affectionate girl on board some vessel, and is anxious ——"

Up went the window again — again the same voice and the same questions — but not exactly the same results; the schooner which now entered the harbour, and which, by the in-and-outishness of the Quebec, Saville could not see — for he had the curiosity *this* time to look out — was nearer the Portsmouth shore than the brig which had pre-

ceded her, so that the replies to the inquirer came tumbled about by the wind in a sort of unintelligible noise, always, at least to Saville's ears, exactly alike, varied only in length and pace of utterance, and reducible to writing only by the words, wulla, wulla, wulla.

"Schooner, a-hoy!" bawled the inquirer through an immense speaking-trumpet; "what schooner's that?"

"Wulla, wulla, wulla."

"Where are you from?"

"Wulla, wulla."

"What's your master's name?"

"Wulla, wulla, wulla."

"What have you got in?"

"Wulla."

Down went the window, and away went the schooner and so did Saville to his bed. But all in vain: to the schooner succeeded a lugger, after *her* came a ship, and then a brig, and then a lugger again, and to all of these, and to fifty more, were all the same questions put, and the same answers given; until Saville at last became reconciled to the annoyance, which he found proceeded from the neighbouring official window belonging to the Custom-house, whence the inquiries he had heard were authoritatively made, and satisfactorily replied to, before the vessel catechised was permitted to pass.

Habituated for two hours to these queries, and to the violence of the wind, which even out-roared the stentorian Custom-house officer, Saville had responded to the claim of wearied Nature in his first unromantic snore, when a noise not very much unlike a march of cavalry up the ladder-like staircase of the hotel, once more aroused him from his rest.

"Hallo," cried a voice, nearly as loud as that of him with the trumpet; "mind my dressing-case, you sir."

"I say," cried another, "give me some soft bread."

"Tea for twelve," cried a third.

"And toast and butter for sixteen," bellowed a fourth.

Bang went boxes and bundles: men scrambling along passages, children crying, and women scolding; but all men, women, and children, unanimously demanding some.

thing to eat and drink, but more especially tea and toast and butter.

"Anna Maria, my dear," said a man close to Saville's door, "we must get the children's hair cut the first thing, — their heads are like mops."

"And I must get a bonnet somewhere, Frederick," said a lady in reply.

"What is it o'clock by land time?" cried a rough voice; "is the barber up? — I say, waiter, what news is there? — have you got the cholera here? — who's king now? — are the Whigs in or out?"

The waiter, who had been roused from his sleep, was mightily enraged by the confusion of domestic and political questions which were put to him; and the chambermaids, who had not wasted the precious time in dressing, were running about in all directions, in the extreme of deshabille, appearing to the famished eyes of the new arrivals like so many divinities.

Truth to be told, the uproarious party, who, like Macbeth, had murdered sleep, and entirely awakened Charles, comprised the captain and some of the passengers of the Lumper, a country ship from the East Indies, who had preferred getting ashore in the pilot-boat, to waiting on board until the vessel reached Blackwall; a place which, abounding as it does in all the pleasing reminiscences of "mud scrambles," and white bait, is placed at a very considerable distance from the Isle of Portland, at which place the present invaders had got into the boat, in which they had been overtaken by the gale of the preceding evening, and had endured ten times as much wretchedness as they could have anticipated, and at least as much as they deserved, for not sticking to the old ship to the last.

All these ravenous animals, who had been for four months grinding hard biscuit, and digesting salt junk, sprang into the Quebec, afflicted with the most horrible appetites; and the noises which they made were merely the usual evidences of hunger, which all living creatures are in the habit of affording when in a state of incivilisation. The anxiety to have up their boxes, in order to be "rigged out" ready for a start in the morn-

ing, and the necessity for cutting the four months' exuberance of hair from the heads of the young girls and children, and the imperious demand for bonnets, "something like those worn in England," made the Welkin ring, and determined Saville to abandon all further hopes of rest, and dress himself at the earliest opportunity. To what purpose, except, perhaps, to make good a retreat to his sitting-room, and there ensconce himself, it would be difficult to say; for, early as it was, the clouds gave promise of a wretched day, the rain already poured in torrents, and, driven against the windows, must have added a new zest to the meal, or rather meals, which the half-famished, half-drowned passengers were devouring, without regard to decorum or ceremony, some even in Saville's room, the door of which had chanced to stand open, and others in their bed-chambers, and some even upon the stairs.

To a quiet, peaceably-disposed person, all this *emeute* would have been distracting. Saville, little inclined to rest, liked

"the rocking of the battlements;"

and he could not resist the amusement offered him in the spectacle of such a dispersion from the ark, accompanied throughout, as it was at intervals, by the imperious demands of the trumpeter out of the window, and the never-failing answer of wulla, wulla, wulla.

It was not much after seven, when Charles finally made good his footing in his own particular hat-box, to which the ever attentive Twigg, with his own proper hand had conveyed his breakfast, snatched as it were from the teeth of the passengers; and before eight, our hero was seated at a small ricketty table, covered with a diaper napkin, in order to eat, or rather look at (for eating with *him* was out of the question), two lately imported French eggs, which, however, had been long enough from *la belle France* to have become naturalised, a slice of black ham, milk of London quality, stale bread, and rancid butter; the contents of the larder, before noticed, having all gone to satisfy the Lumpers, so called from the name of the fortunate vessel which bore them to our shores.

Nothing could be more wretchedly uncomfortable to Saville than the wearisome, long morning before him. Confined to the house by weather, which would have been infinitely more seasonable in November, and rendered doubly dismal by the beauty and brightness of the preceding day, he read and re-read his magazines, and his anecdotes, and gazed on the Queen Charlotte, and watched the ferry, and listened to the inquisitor next door, until his patience was totally exhausted.

At length, it blowing a perfect hurricane, the Cowes and Southampton packet was announced as ready to start. In that they were to proceed, Miss Johnstone having informed her correspondent, that the Franklin party were to remain at Ryde until the following morning, suggesting either the stay of the lovers at Portsmouth till their return, or their immediately crossing to Cowes, where every arrangement might be made before the enemy arrived; Johnstone having contrived to excuse herself from attending upon Harriet, who with great good nature and a perfect understanding of the reasons of her absence, had readily agreed to accept the services of her "Ma's" maid during their little excursion; an excursion made at the suggestion of Mr. Smith, under the pretence of pleasing his betrothed, but, in fact, for the purpose of ascertaining whether he could not engage a house at Ryde upon cheaper terms than one at Cowes.

The wind blew so violently that it was scarcely possible to stand; and in the time before hot water and paddles bade defiance to the elements it would have been considered impossible for the vessel to go. However, the packet in question had steamed round to the point, where she lay under the lee of the houses, the wind having shifted in the morning to a gale at south-east. Twigg, who was an admirable land officer, was the least in the world like

"That maritime soldier, the royal marine."

He was as helpless at sea as a cat, and his want of skill was in no degree compensated by any excess of courage. In the bubbling of the water, and the spray which he saw splashing against the graduated stone facing of the point,

he thought he beheld death and destruction staring him in the face. In a hurry not to be described, he bundled his master's luggage into the boat, tumbled himself down the narrow steps, without regard to the law of precedence, and, in his alarm, actually scolded Saville for his want of expedition in relieving him from what he considered the perilous situation of dancing upon the little toppling waves within a yard and a quarter of the street. Squalls of rain beat in their faces, and although covered with cloaks and umbrellas, and the distance of the packet not being more than four or five boat-lengths, they were nearly wet through when they reached the gangway, whence Saville slipped down the companion into the cabin; and Twigg, almost unconscious what he did, was hauled forward and deposited down the fore hatchway, to be dried by the heat of the boiler.

To be sure there was a vast deal of noise and bustle, and the packet was under way when they reached her. Saville, anxious not to be seen or recognised by anybody who might know him, and equally anxious not to be bored with the conversation of anybody who did not, rolled himself up in a corner of the cabin, which was dark, hot, and ill-smelling, owing probably to the circumstance of all the company having been soaked through on shore, before they were deposited on board.

Away they went — bang, bang, went the engines, shake went the vessel, and rattle went the bulk-heads, and Charles, worn out with worry, and fatigued by his want of rest during the night, fell into a profound slumber, from which it appears he did not awake for upwards of two hours and a half.

At the termination of that period he shook off his slumber, and sat upright on the sofa, where he had been so long reclining. The weather seemed to have moderated; he thought a little air on deck would be agreeable; and to see the island which contained his fair one, even although he was not that day to be in the same town with her, would be something. Having accordingly scrambled over the legs of various people who were huddled up in different corners, and begged a proportionate number of pardons, he ascended the companion, and cast his eyes around to

trace the line of land from Ryde to Cowes; but to his surprise, on turning to the south, he saw no land at all, neither to the west, nor could he anywhere distinctly make out anything, except right astern, quite on the horizon, where he beheld a ridge of something dark which, for any cognizable land-mark he saw upon it, might have been Cape Fly-away itself.

"Why," said he to the man at the wheel, "you give the island a wide berth to-day."

"Yes, sir," said the man, "we don't want to have nothing to do with she this weather; and we can hold our own — 'tan't with us as with sailing wessels."

"No," said Saville, "but when do you get to Cowes then?"

"Cowes, sir," said the man, "I can't say as ever I were at Cowes in my life, and I don't think as I shall be, please God, for some time to come."

"What do you mean?" said Saville; "why this is the Cowes packet?"

"Cowes, sir!" Lord love your heart," said the man, "you might put the Cowes packet into our cabin."

"Then where are we going?" said Saville, in a tone of agony which made the steersman stare.

"To Granville, sir," said the man, "where, please the pigs, we shall be by to-morrow dinner-time."

"France!" exclaimed Saville. "What on earth shall I do! — Where is my servant?" added he, speaking to the steward's mate.

"Dead sick below, sir," said the man.

"And I raving mad above! Never mind," continued Saville, "it matters not what the mishap was that brought us here, here we are; the next thing to ascertain is the soonest time at which we can get back."

"We come back, sir, next Friday," said the man.

"An age!" thought Saville.

"I thought somehow your servant was wrong," said the steward's mate; "but he would persist he was right, so I said no more about it. I'm very sorry, sir — I ——"

"Sorry! — thank you, thank you," said Saville, "it is the very deuce to me. But I must bear it of course; it is

nobody's fault but my own. Five days! Mercy on us!" and so he went on muttering and moaning, as if not yet quite convinced of the real state of the affair, and nourishing one of those hopes in which none but desperate lovers ever indulge, that even yet they might fall in with something in the Channel which would put them back sooner than the packet possibly could. To discuss the point with Twigg, under the influence of alarm and sea-sickness, would be ridiculous; and, accordingly, he retired to his place in the cabin, and witnessed, with the closing night, all the preparations for eating, drinking, and sleeping, which his fellow-passengers were making, in every direction, to his utter discomfiture and annoyance.

All worldly evils have a termination. By the middle of the next day they were safely anchored at Granville; and Saville, having previously vented his long-dormant misery upon Twigg, who made his appearance shortly after the packet had slipped into smooth water, composed his countenance and moderated his manner into something like placid civility, when the officer of the port came on board. He saw that the master of the packet had communicated to that gentleman the mistake under which he had become a visiter there; and that the officer was consequently advancing to make some civil observations upon the misadventure.

"I shall be sorry to hear," said the officer, in English, "dat you have come to us by mistake. I am ver much afraid it shall be serious loss to you for de time——"

"Why, sir," said Saville, "it is extremely provoking; but not so seriously injurious as it might have been."

"No! but," continued the Frenchman, "under de circumstance it may be worse dan you tink."

"No, no," said Saville, with an assumption of gaiety in his manner, "I shall go back on Friday, and have seen a little bit of the continent which will be new to me."

"Ah!" said the Frenchman, opening his eyes to double their ordinary width, "dere he is; dat is what I meant. You cannot go back Friday; nor can you see our country. Dere is orders from our government to put you in quarantine

forty days, because dere has been in dis packet a case of cholera!"

"Forty days, sir!" said Saville; "a whole life sacrificed would not be worth so much as forty days! How can I write to explain?"

"Oh! you must not write, sir," said the officer; "I am to allow no communication with de vessel, and you are to stay here till you get well."

"But, sir, I am not ill," said Saville.

"I don't know dat," said the officer; "it may come out upon you some day or other when you little tink of him."

"What, sir," said Saville, "do you mean to say that I am to be shut up in this vessel in order to *get* the cholera?"

"I cannot speak to dat," said the officer; "my orders are vary simple; dis vessel must remain where she is forty days, or such less time as de government may hereafter decide upon."

Saying which the French gentleman turned upon his heel, and left Saville standing transfixed as it were to the deck; and when Twigg, not yet aware of all the consequences of his mistake, came aft to inquire, unluckily for him, something about taking the luggage ashore, he was received by a volley of words from his master, which nothing but love or distraction could, in these civilised days, have either palliated or justified.

It would neither be entertaining nor instructive to the reader to repeat the angry expressions of Mr. Saville, or the energetic defence of his servant, upon whose zeal and activity no imputation could be cast, seeing that his fate in love and life was linked with his master's; nor will it be necessary to detail all the proceedings of the ill-fated couple, who, after having been in the packet three days, were carried ashore in the hospital boat, and placed apart in a lazaretto, where they remained twenty-nine days of the prescribed forty, and whence they were released exactly in time to arrive back again at Portsmouth four mornings after the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Smith (now united in the holy bonds of matrimony), to spend the honey-moon on the continent.

CHAPTER IX.

It may easily be imagined that the intelligence of Harriet's marriage and departure was bitterly painful to Saville; and the horrors arising from the dreadful certainty that her fate and his were irrevocably fixed, received additional strength from the conviction, the certainty which existed in his mind, that she—ignorant of course of the unfortunate mistake of the bewildered lacquey, and of their consequent delays and detentions — would naturally attribute his sudden silence and abrupt disappearance (after having by his ambassador pledged himself to active measures for her rescue) to coldness or caprice, corroborated by his former apparent negligence about her; she being unable to ascertain whether all she had now heard about his offer and his letter was true or not, seeing that she dare not apply upon the subject to her mother, the only person who could have given her any authentic information upon it.

The reflections, therefore, in which Saville indulged were of the most galling and irritating nature. That she was lost, irretrievably lost, was the great and fatal truth connected with his misfortunes; but, convinced as he was, that she was ready to be rescued from the grasp of her present lawfully wedded husband, if he had been at hand to favour her escape, it really was too bad to lose her. Besides, what would she think of his conduct? How must she despise him for his neglect of her; how debased he must be in her opinion; and the more so, as having frivolously revived the feeling in her heart, which she had in some degree successfully struggled to overcome. He saw all his misery; for although he was studying for the chancery bar, he was convinced, whatever the practice *there* might be, that, in the cause of love, attachment does not always follow contempt.

Too true, however, was the news. In one of the libraries, Saville read the details of the marriage, set forth in the imperishable columns of the Morning Post; and as he read of the beautiful bride, enveloped in her beautiful veil of Brussels lace, he thought of the odious bridegroom, so

far advanced in the vale of years, and launched forth in imprecations deep and heavy on his head.

The faithful Twigg was, for the moment, as inconsolable as the unhappy Saville. Miss J. was gone, but not married; there was yet a gleam of hope for *him;* it was but a spark, yet he fanned it with his sighs, and wished himself into the belief that she would remain constant and true, attributing their non-appearance at Cowes to the timidity or indecision of his master; qualities for which, knowing him as well as *she* did, it was not probable she would give her own sweetheart credit.

When the first shock, which the sudden cut of the Gordian knot of Saville's love-affair excited, had somewhat subsided, his thoughts reverted to himself; his present position, his future prospects, and the course of remedies he should adopt to staunch the wound he felt assured he could never heal. To return to London would be absurd: it was long vacation; chambers were deserted, and lawyers at liberty; and besides, could he, at such a moment, apply himself to study, or divert his mind from subjects of such deep interest as those which now wholly engrossed them, into the dry and confined channels of legal education? It was open to him by a desperate resolution to study to obliterate his fondest recollections; for he

> "The better to improve his taste,
> Was by his parents' fondness plac'd
> Amongst the blest, the chosen few
> (Blest, if their happiness they knew),
> Who, for three hundred guineas paid
> To some great master of the trade,
> Have at his rooms, by *special* favour,
> His leave to use their best endeavour,
> By drawing pleas from nine till four,
> To earn him twice three hundred more,
> And after dinner may repair
> To 'foresaid rooms, and then and there,
> Have 'foresaid leave from six till ten,
> To draw the aforesaid pleas again."

Whether Saville, admitting the efficacy of the medicine considered the remedy worse than the disease, history does not inform us; all we know is, that, instead of flying from the scenes recently hallowed by the presence of his beloved, he resolved to remain where he was, having first ascertained that the family party had separated and de-

parted from the island, on the day when the marriage was celebrated. What occurred to our hero there we shall hereafter see; in the meanwhile we must take a glance at our dearly beloved friends, Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

To describe the state of Harriet's existence, from the moment in which she had so far committed herself as to encourage Charles's proposition of visiting, and, as he called it, rescuing her, until the fatal morning, when the ceremony which eternally decided her lot in life, would be impossible. The consciousness that she had failed in her duty to her mother, and faltered in her allegiance to her betrothed husband, was made a thousand times more painful than it otherwise would have been, by the mortifying reflection that she had permitted herself to be duped by empty professions, and sacrificed either to the ignorant zeal of her new confidant, or the heartless vanity of a worthless pretender to her love. Day after day passed, the lingering hours were counted, and yet no news of Saville came; it was one continued fever and irritation; for while she pined and sickened at his protracted absence, she was in a constant state of alarm lest he should unexpectedly appear.

Miss Johnstone, in whom the spirit of enterprise was strong, had, by permission of her mistress, made an excursion to Portsmouth, where, by application at the post-office, she discovered that her letter to the faithless Twigg had been safely delivered to its right owner. This certainty, far from being consolatory, added new fuel to the flame which was already consuming the lady and her maid. Nothing could have happened to keep their lovers away, except distaste and a determination to put an end to an affair which, with a duplicity scarcely paralleled, they had themselves originated.

Miss J., as Twigg called her, was not to be baffled so easily; she determined to "know the rights of it;" and as she was acting in the double capacity of principal for herself, and agent for her mistress, Harriet could not permit the authority which she undoubtedly possessed over her in the one character, to control her operations in the other. It was by thus temporising, that the young lady permitted her servant to try the experiment of writing to

Saville's London lodgings, to inquire — not after *him* for the world—but after his valet, satisfied with believing that any answer which Twigg might send to "Miss J.'s" letter would, while it described his own pursuits and occupations, necessarily contain a detail of those in which his master might be engaged.

Here, again, they were doomed to be disappointed: the epistle of the anxious damsel remained unanswered, unnoticed; and at the end of a fortnight, both the "forsaken" agreed, that it would be quite unworthy the dignity of the sex to take any farther steps for the recovery of their lost lovers; Miss Johnstone, however, specially consoling herself with her negative loss, which she contrasted in glowing colours with the positive calamity which awaited her betrothed mistress.

It was easy to make this determination, and, with a mind like that of Miss J., not difficult, perhaps, to abide by it; but to Harriet the struggle proved nearly mortal. The continued conflict between duty and inclination, and hope and despair, added to the remorseful regrets which she experienced at having betrayed her weakness, and compromised her dignity of character, by the admission of a claim upon her heart, which appeared to have been made but in sport, were almost too much for her delicate frame and constitution; yet she endured them all with that meek and unworldly patience which exclusively belongs to woman.

It was a piteous sight to see her selecting and choosing bridal ornaments, and accepting from the trembling hand of her dotard lover gifts which could scarcely be considered any thing but bribes; and there was in her manner a quiet resignation, a total abandonment of herself to the views and will of others, which at times even wounded the feelings of her mother. It was, however, too late now to retract; although Mrs. Franklin suspected that the total silence which Harriet observed with regard to Saville, and the entire absence of any attempt on his part either to see or prevail upon her to take the desperate measure which could alone relieve her from her approaching thraldom, was merely maintained as a cloak for stratagems, which

she imagined to be in a regular course of progress, and never did she rise in the morning without expecting to hear that the bird was flown.

She could not otherwise account for the appearance of implicit obedience which characterised every action of her poor devoted daughter's life. She little knew the awful struggle by which her mind was torn, and least of all could she suspect that the calm resolution of her daughter had been produced by the believed infidelity and heartlessness of her lover.

Time passed — one day succeeded another — and still the aching pain of dread and expectation continued. The ring was bought which was to bind her to her Mezentian spouse; he placed it sportively on the finger which it was to bind for life — a mark, at once, of duty and affection. To him, this (to others, easy task) was not so trifling an achievement; his hand, trembling neither "with love nor fear," but with a more incurable malady, old age, was not well calculated to place the golden mark of bondage — apt illustration of such a match — on his captive; yet, in three short days, he was to do so in earnest, to secure his passive victim. He affected to be gay and jocose, and concluded the rehearsal of his performance by holding in his hand the finger he, after two minutes' pottering, had enslaved. There sat the pale, placid girl, patiently undergoing the protracted operation, her mother looking archly and almost mischievously on; while "Miss J.," entering the apartment on tip-toe, stood eyeing the scene with an expression in her countenance of mingled surprise and disgust. It was a subject for a painter; and with "Ringing a *Belle*," by way of title, might have made no inconsiderable figure in one of the exhibitions.

Ringing of bells indeed there was, within three days of this occurrence; and favours, and gloves, and cake, and all the other concomitants of nuptial ceremonials.

> "I pass each previous settlement and deed,
> Too long for me to write, or you to read;
> Nor will with quaint impertinence display
> The pomp, the pageantry, the proud array:
> The time approached — to church they went ——"

and were made man and wife; Harriet, absorbed in tears,

and wholly unconscious of what was passing; Mr. Smith himself not being entirely delighted with the observations of some of the spectators, made as he led, or rather lifted with the assistance of the bride's-maids, his broken-hearted better-half to the carriage. Mrs. Franklin looked at the by-standers and her daughter, as if she could have killed the former, and eaten the latter: her pride was hurt by hearing a murmur amongst the crowd, in which the word "shame" was distinguishable; but Colonel O'Lollocky, who handed her from the door, hurried her through the knot of people who surrounded it, in order that she might escape the reproaches which they seemed unanimous in breathing forth.

The reader knows that with this ceremony the residence of the party in the island terminated. After a *déjeûner-à-la-fourchette*, the bride and bridegroom proceeded to Southampton, on their way to Bath, Cheltenham, Malvern, Leamington, and eventually the Lakes; and Mrs. Franklin, with her sister-in-law, her niece, and Colonel O'Lollocky, started at the same time for Portsmouth; Miss Johnstone having nearly cried her eyes out at being compelled to share the rumble of her young mistress's carriage with her old master's favourite servant — a favourite of two-and-twenty years' standing; and who, before they had travelled two and twenty miles, gave several indications of an ardent desire to follow his excellent master's example in the way of matrimony, if Miss J. could be prevailed upon to accede to his entreaties.

Our *dramatis personæ* are now scattered, and the reader must make up his mind to a long separation from them. It would be worse than useless to record in detail the miseries which poor Harriet found herself destined to undergo. Dissatisfaction with himself soon rendered her husband dissatisfied with *her;* and a parsimony, as absurd in him, as it was distressing to his wife, added to the most restless jealousy, kept her in a state not to be described.

Saville, with a mind completely overthrown by the circumstances which had deprived him of his Harriet, conscious what her opinion of him must be, and yet feeling that any attempt to undeceive her as to his conduct could

only be construed into a desire to maintain a correspondence with her, which, in their relative positions, it would be most indelicate to keep up, determined upon abandoning his profession, and travelling. The moment the reader hears this, he will construe such a determination into the result of a restless anxiety and an undefined hope of meeting his loved and lost angel (by accident of course) on the Continent; or as an intermediate step between writing to her in his own vindication, and giving her up altogether. But it turned out that he thought better even of this scheme, and generously relinquished what might have afforded him the greatest gratification now left within his reach, — that of seeing and explaining to her the circumstances by which he had been forced into apparent inconsistency and frivolity; because he could not but apprehend one of two evils as likely to result from his putting it into execution: — he might either succeed in withdrawing her from her matrimonial allegiance, or do what, as far as the world was concerned, would have been equally injurious, — subject her to the imputation of tolerating the advances of a lover, who had been discarded, not by her, but by the authority of her mother.

After much deliberation, he came to the resolution of applying himself to the drudgery of his profession, in the hope of diverting his thoughts from their one dear object; and in the certainty that, however much study and other pursuits might temporarily relieve his mind, his heart would still remain constant to his Harriet. To wait years and years for the consummation of happiness dependent upon the death of another, may be thought neither Christian-like nor proper; but, certain as he was of her affection, convinced by the last communication which passed between them, that she reciprocated his love, his resolution was nothing but a fitting return for her kindness. What he hoped, or what he looked forward to, could in no wise affect either the health or happiness of the far distant possessor of his beloved. No tie of friendship bound him to the veteran husband; and his anxiety for Harriet's comfort and welfare was so pure and disinterested, that, if he could have believed — which of course under the circumstances

he did not — that she was happy, he would have satisfied himself with watching her career through life without a murmur of discontent.

The career of her mother as a widow was very speedily stopped by her accepting the hand of Colonel O'Lollocky, who found little difficulty in convincing her of the importance of the loss she had sustained in the society of her daughter, or in impressing upon her mind the advantages which, in every worldly point of view, would attend her union with him, whose whole life would be devoted to her happiness, and who felt that his own would be assured to him by her consent. This assurance of the colonel's had its effect; and in less than a month after Harriet had set her the example, Mrs. Franklin entered the holy state of matrimony with the gallant officer, who had, before that ceremony took place, proposed taking his matured bride over to Ireland to see a remarkable fine property which he had there, — at least in expectation, — upon which there were a fine mansion, a valuable farm, capital shooting, and a beautiful decoy. This journey, however, he postponed immediately after the wedding; and Mrs. Franklin, although, for a time, blinded by a passion which she fancied love, began to see pretty clearly, that of all the promised valuables of her gallant spouse in the "green island," nothing was entirely to be depended upon except the decoy.

Time rolled on, and Saville persisted in his assiduous attention to business, until his health became visibly and seriously impaired, and he was compelled to seek change of air as the only chance of restoration. To his kind friends, the Alvinghams, then some time married and settled, the broken-hearted young man was indebted for a hospitable welcome to Harlingham Parsonage; and under their happy roof, and in the enjoyment of that tranquillity which is afforded to the mind, almost unconsciously, by the society of such people, he recovered both health and spirits; and when he quitted them after a lengthened stay till the end of the year of Harriet's departure, he promised to revisit them annually at the same season.

It was after his return to London from his first agree-

able visit to Harlingham, and seven or eight months after Harriet's marriage, that as he was sitting at breakfast, just ready to start to Chambers, Twigg entered the room with an opened letter in his hand, — his countenance was animated by an expression of interest and importance, — a sort of triumphant giggle was on his lips, and in his manner a consciousness of having something to impart which his master would be most anxious to hear.

"I've got a letter, sir," said Twigg, "come all the way from where the sallad ile comes, in the basket-bottomed bottles — full of news, sir."

"Indeed!" said Saville, "that must be agreeable enough for you."

"Very, sir," said Twigg.

"Who is it from?" asked Saville.

"From 'Miss J.,' sir," said Twigg, "who moreover is 'Miss J.' still.

Saville was not prepared for this announcement; he did not know the particular place at which the Smiths had fixed their residence; and when Twigg mentioned his letter, and described its date, there was nothing in Saville's mind to associate it with his loved, lost Harriet.

"It's full of news, as I have just said," continued the anxious valet, "and you may read it, sir, in welcome — all but just a little bit where I have doubled it down." Saying this, he handed the precious document to his master, who proceeded to peruse its contents. They had best speak for themselves: —

"Florence ——, ——.

"DEAR ALEXANDER,

"You will think me vastly foolish, I dare say, and perhaps laugh at me for writing to you ever again, after your extraordinary conduct; but, as I say, if you have behaved bad to me, your master has behaved worse to my mistress ——"

"You must not mind that, sir," said Twigg, interrupting Saville's reading; "she means all for the best — you'll see presently — go on, sir."

"I don't know enough of him to know what his real

principle at bottom is, and cannot therefore judge how much he is to be blamed, or how much to be pitied; but you, I cannot think, would wilfully have made me the protestations you have made, if you wasn't in earnest, and serious and honourable in your intentions ——"

"That, you see, sir," said Twigg, means ——"

"Oh, I see perfectly," said Saville; "well."

"It is because I quite believe this, that I take the opportunity of Miss Mill—who is Lady Frances Fotheringham's maid—going to England, to write, in order, by giving you our address here, to afford you an opportunity of explaining your conduct to me—that is to say, if you are yet alive, and in Charles Street, St. James's Square. She has promised to carry my letter home, and put it into the twopenny-post-office before she leaves London."

"But," said Saville, having read thus far, "this letter seems wholly to concern you, and I have no right ——"

"Right, sir!" said Twigg; "what's right to do with it? — I'm not ashamed nor afraid of what's in the letter, as far as I am concerned: and if you'll go on, you'll see something more about yourself ——"

"Equally flattering with the former observations," said Saville.

"Write, if you please, Alexander, to me here — that is, if you continue to care at all about me — and explain your real feelings, and the reason for your extraordinary conduct in never coming to the Isle of Wight, after all the pains I had taken; because, if you are in the same mind, and was prevented by sickness or accident from keeping your appointment, I tell you straight-forward, that I neither have changed, nor am likely to change my mind, as Miss Mill could tell you, if you had the opportunity of speaking to her; but if you have wilfully neglected me, and do not reply to this, I shall consider you have done with me altogether; and as I have a very good opportunity of bettering myself, in that case, shall accept the offer of an Italian marquis, who is very fond of me, and has a fine estate in his own country of more than a hundred and thirty-two pounds a year. He says that I ——"

"Ah, sir!" said Twigg, "that's what I have doubled down, because it's all about myself, sir ——"

"Oh, of course that is sacred," said Saville; well, where may I turn to?"

"Up there, sir," said Twigg, "where it begins, 'My mistress.'"

"Oh!" said Saville.

"My mistress has been very very ill; she has not entirely recovered the shock and disappointment occasioned by Mr. Saville's cruel conduct. I thought she would have died. There she was, Alexander, day after day going down to the bathing-machine, which was where I told you to tell Mr. Saville to meet us; a washing and washing herself every morning of her life, till there was scarce any thing of her left; and what with that, and weeping, I do assure you I thought we should have lost her. She is better a little, and now speaks of your master, and will let me mention his name. But there is a book of his — one which she did not send back when she returned all his bits of things that he had left at our house — and I often see her reading in it, and crying; but she tries not to let me see it; and the minute I come into the room she jumps up and hides the book, and affects to laugh and talk something about nothing, just merely for conversation."

"There, sir," said Twigg, "I told you, sir, there was something about *you*."

"And extremely consolatory, as well as complimentary, that something is," said Saville.

"As for my mistress's husband, he has been at the very point of death. What has been the matter with him I cannot rightly tell you, because I do not exactly know; but the doctors say he has got something the matter with his something, in Latin, which I believe is his liver in English, and he has great pain in his side, and is always sick; but I am no great hand at Italian, and don't know the names the people here give to complaints. One thing I can make out, and that is, that he is not long for this world. And between you and me and the post, when he goes it will be no great loss; for he leads my poor young lady such a life, that if he was the great mogul, stuffed with diamonds, I would not stop with him. Nobody dare speak to her, nor she to nobody; and every body is run-

ning after her here, because she is what they call *leggiadra*, and *bella*, and all that; but if any man bows or stops a moment to talk to her, old Smith is in one of his tantrums, and scolds her worse than ever her mother did,—and that's saying a good deal. However, when the old man pops off there she'll be just as young and as handsome as ever; only a little thinner and paler than she was before, and if I am not very much mistaken, if your master can make out, as I hope you can, a good explanation of his behaviour, just as ready to be Mrs. Saville."

"Psha!" said Charles, "how—

"'These fools rush in where angels fear to tread!'

The most delicate points are discussed and settled; every thing upon which the tenderest feelings are excited canvassed with carelessness and flippancy, and the fate of half a score people sealed, with as much ease as a gown is pinned or a curl twisted."

"Fools! sir," said Twigg, reproachfully, "you can't think Miss J. a fool?"

"No, no, Twigg," said Saville, endeavouring to hide the emotions caused by her abrupt, but clearly correct communication of the state of the case; "no, let *her* be one of the angels; she is very like one."

"Very, sir," said Twigg; adding parenthetically, and in an under tone, ("Not that I ever see'd one.")

——"You may tell Mr. Saville of this letter, and give my dutiful respects to him, if you are yourself able to let me see that both you and he are wrongfully accused by us. I say us, for although Miss Harriet—I cannot bear to call her Mrs. Smith—is as mute as mute can be on the subject, I am sure in her heart she would be happier, and in her mind easier, if once she could think she has not been forsaken by him on purpose; for to be an abandoned woman, Alexander, is, as I know, a very sad thing indeed. I don't mean to say much, because I am afraid of the worst; and sometimes fear he may be one of them vile wretches of men who sport about and trifle with the feelings of the softer sex, and that you may, perhaps, be as bad; but, nevertheless, I will hope, and, as I said before

if you can clear yourself, write to me; and if he can clear himself with my young lady, there's nothing I won't do to serve him; and whatever he may write in a letter, I will give her, provided it is all fair and honourable. But I will not have a hand in any thing wrong; only I am sure if she was satisfied about his not being fickle and changing, she would be more at ease: and how could she be so well satisfied as by having the assurance under his own hand?

"When I recollect, Alexander, ——"

"That's doubled down, sir," said Twigg; "there's nothing more about you, sir, not a syllable; it's only about Miss Mill, and two pots of soap, and some other little conundrums which Miss J. has sent me, and which Miss M. is to give me, provised I am single and constant, sir. You may read it all for the matter of that, only ——"

"Oh," said Saville, "I have no desire, I assure you. I am much obliged to you for a sight of the letter, and ——"

"In course," said Twigg, "you will take Miss J.'s hint, and write."

"That," said Saville, "requires consideration, and must be deliberated upon at leisure; there will be plenty of time for that, before you send your answer."

"I shall write to-day, sir," said Twigg, "and if I can lay my hands upon Miss Mill, give her ocular proof of my constancy, and get the soap and the enceteras."

"Well," said Saville, "I shall be prepared with my answer when your letter is ready."

Twigg retired in high spirits, and left Saville in a state of mind difficult to describe. His beloved Harriet was suffering a martyrdom from which he might have rescued her. That he was accidentally and unavoidably prevented from achieving this most desirable object, she did not know; and he perfectly agreed with Miss Johnstone that the knowledge of the fact would relieve her mind and diminish her remorse. Then ought he not to communicate this fact simply? No. It appeared to him that the certainty of his constancy, and the immutability of

his affection, would equally excite and agitate her; and that it would be cruel to open a new source of grief, when, perhaps, time had in some degree alleviated the sorrow derivable from another.

As to this, however, it was pretty clear that Twigg's vindication of his own conduct to Miss Johnstone, over which Saville could have no control, would inevitably involve his master's exculpation. Yet he dare not himself write to Harriet. It would be dishonourable; it would be dangerous to her comfort and welfare; and what are so dear to man as the ease and security of the woman he loves? She might think him cold — cruel, or even yet inconstant, if he let slip the opportunity of communicating the few facts connected with his delay in France. But why should he undeceive her? why, for the personal gratification of setting himself right in a matter where, whether he were right or wrong, fate had decided that no good could accrue to either himself or his beloved, should he farther endanger her tranquillity? She now believed him false; let it be so. Better that he should suffer under unmerited reproach, than that she should again be agitated or disturbed.

If he wrote — she would answer; could he — had he the stoicism to hear the complaints with which no doubt her letter would be filled, and not be moved to a line of conduct which, if persisted in, might lead to the saddest and bitterest results, and perhaps eventually mar the brightness and sully the purity which he had so long worshipped and adored?

The *Sortes Virgilianæ* have, before now, influenced the conduct and affected the minds of the greatest and wisest; and although, upon the present occasion, Saville had not recourse to any book of fate to decide his choice in the course which he had to steer amongst the baffling winds of love and honour, it did so happen that while doubting and hesitating — for his principle almost faltered when he thought of her misery and his own debasement in her estimation — his eyes fell upon an accidentally open page of poems, which lay on his breakfast-table. The

lines which were presented to his sight were these, by Soame Jenyns.

"Too plain, dear youth, these tell-tale eyes
My heart your own declare;
Let it, for Heaven's sake, suffice
To know your triumph there.

Forbear your utmost power to try,
Nor further urge your sway;
Press not for what I must deny,
For fear I should obey.

Could all your arts successful prove,
Would you a being undo,
Whose greatest failing is her love,
And that her love for you?

Say would you use the very power
You from her fondness claim,
To ruin, in one fatal hour,
A life of spotless fame?

Ah! cease, dear love, to do an ill,
Because perhaps you may;
But rather try your utmost skill,
To save me, than betray.

Be you yourself my virtue's guard,
Defend, and not pursue;
For ah! I feel the task too hard,
To strive with love and you."

It would, perhaps, be doing an injustice to the firmness and integrity of Saville, to attribute his determination not to write to Harriet to the accidental presentation of this appeal "from Chloe to Strephon" to his view. It certainly was a curious coincidence; and, accordingly, when Twigg came in, and announced that he had got his soap and his encetras, as he called them, and had written his letter, and meant to send it next day, Saville, much to the disappointment of his servant, and, as I suspect, to that of many of my female readers, who "thought better of him," announced that he had no note to send.

CHAPTER X.

It was singular enough that Saville's scrupulousness was needless; as it turned out, Harriet—had her sorrow permitted it—might have received his letter, and returned an answer; for, before Twigg's letter reached Florence, she had become a WIDOW. Mr Smith had been suddenly at-

tacked with some violent spasmodic affection in the middle of the night — his medical man was sent for — he grew worse — three other physicians were called in — and he died.

Harriet's situation after this event would have been embarrassing and difficult, had it not happened that her mother and Colonel O'Lollocky had been her guests at Florence for a few days previous to its occurrence; and, although Mrs. O'Lollocky's jointure had been so secured by Smith after his marriage with the daughter, that she was placed in a permanent state of independence, it appeared that the gallant colonel had discovered the climate of England to be much too keen for him, and that the more genial air of the continent was infinitely better suited to his constitution than that of his native country. Such had been the liberality of the *young* couple since their happy union, that the circumstance of having an establishment at their command was by no means disagreeable; and as, of course, Harriet would be charmed with their society, it was settled that they should pass a few weeks with her and her husband at Florence, — an indefinite sort of engagement, which the colonel reasonably imagined might be considerably extended, if convenient.

The death of their hospitable host made no kind of difference in their arrangements; and Harriet, accustomed to the sway of her parent, suffered her to take the reins which in fact were her own; and satisfied, by circumstances, that her maid's interpretation of Saville's conduct, communicated in Twigg's letter, could not be a correct one, or at all events not one upon which, with her sense of delicacy, she could act, or even rely, she abandoned herself to a grief which her common acquaintance attributed to the loss of her husband, with many observations and remarks upon its oddity and extravagance.

The arrival of Mrs. O'Lollocky, her assumption of power upon the death of the old gentleman, combined with the announcement of the widow's determination not to return to England until the year of mourning was past, produced a serious change in the administration of her domestic affairs. Miss Johnstone, who had anticipated, with more

anxiety of feeling than apprehension of the result, the demise of her master as the termination of her residence abroad, newly fired by the certainty of Mr. Twigg's fidelity, confided to her "young lady" her resolution of quitting her service, and proceeding to England; adding, that as an opportunity offered of her getting home with a "return family," she trusted her immediate departure would not be inconvenient.

Of course, Harriet, who, having been made the *confidante* of her attachment, and necessarily of the exoneration of her lover from the charge of inconstancy and neglect, would not suffer any little worry to herself to interfere with her maid's views and objects. To part with a maid is as unpleasant an affair for a lady as can be well imagined:—she has got used to all her mistress's habits and ways — anticipates her likings, and obviates her antipathies — and is altogether so important a depositary of confidential matters, that, puzzled as a king sometimes is to get rid of his prime minister for want of a successor, the royal embarrassment is scarcely so great upon such an occasion as that which is felt by a lady in parting with her *soubrette*.

The arrangements for "Miss J.'s" departure were, however, speedily made, Mrs. O'Lollocky accelerating her removal as much as possible, she having conceived an unconquerable aversion from the "young person;" whom she believed — and we know how justly — to have been the confederate and counsellor of her daughter while she was single and married; and anticipated in the reciprocity of dislike, which Miss J. made no great effort to conceal, some plot against herself and her ornamental husband, who was no great favourite with either mistress or maid.

Harriet did not part with her without much regret. Her fidelity and attachment had been proved; and she quitted her mistress's service with nearly as much money — including a legacy from her late master — as would produce her an income in England equal to the rental of the territorial domain of the rejected nobleman, who had been dangling about her for some time.

Before she went, Miss J. played the same game with

her mistress at Florence, as Twigg had tried with Saville in London; and, although the state of affairs was considerably altered since the latter period, it made no change in Harriet's determination — she strenuously refused to permit Johnstone to be the bearer of a message or even a word to Saville. She saw, it is true, in the vindication of Twigg, a vindication of his master; but she could not believe that if he were equally anxious upon the subject, he would have permitted such an opportunity as had offered for his exculpation to slip, or have neglected to disabuse her mind upon a topic to her the most galling and mortifying.

"No, Johnstone," said Mrs. Smith, "my parting injunction to you is, not to mention my name to Mr. Saville; and, above all, I entreat — and indeed command you — not to permit my reason for coming to this determination to escape your lips. Circumstances have occurred, under which I might have been justified in sending him my regards and remembrances, if he had thought proper to clear himself from the imputation which he must know rests upon him: I have new reasons afforded me, since my mother's arrival here, to be satisfied *why* he remained silent."

"What does the old lady say?" said Miss Johnstone.

"It is of no consequence," replied Harriet, trembling from head to foot, the tears standing in her eyes, her cheeks pale as death — "of no consequence whatever; he was right — it was I who first faltered in my affection for *him* — it is right and just, but I cannot help feeling — he is on the very point of marriage to a sister-in-law of his friend Mr. Alvingham."

"I don't believe one single syllable of it, ma'am," said Johnstone; "I am sure it can't be so, from what Mr. Twigg writes, and what ——"

"It is not likely he would have admitted him to a confidence upon such a subject, at a moment when he knew his man was about to write to *you*."

"I won't believe it, ma'am," said Johnstone. "All I ask is, if I find it out to be a fib, — I'm sure it *is* one, — may I write to you to tell you so; nay, if I am sure it is

a fib, may I tell Mr. Saville what I know to be really the case?"

"Hush, hush, Johnstone," said Harriet, "I cannot suffer you to do any of these things — time will show us all. If Mr. Saville has been calumniated, he will be free to take what course he pleases; after what you know, and what he knows of my feelings, it would be worse than useless to deny how deeply interested I am in every thing concerning him; but I have already stooped too much, and I cannot, particularly in my present position, think of communicating with a gentleman who did not consider it worth while to acquit himself in my eyes, or run the risk of admitting the affection I feel for one, who, before you reach England, will perhaps be the husband of another woman."

"Oh, I don't say, ma'am," replied Johnstone, "but that you show a proper spirit there; but however fond Mr. Saville may be of the society of his friend Mr. Alvingham, I am quite sure, from what Mr. Twigg told me almost the very last time I ever spoke to him, that none of the Miss Simpsons would do for a wife for *him;* he used to laugh at them, and quiz them, and call them the dear innocents of Baa-lamb hill."

"Ah! Johnstone," said Harriet, "it has very often happened that first impressions have entirely worn off, and that men have married women, who in the early stage of their acquaintance they have laughed at infinitely more than Mr. Saville ever laughed at those young ladies. However, let the case be as it may, my injunctions to you are positive and unqualified; and although I cease to have any control or authority over you, I think I may rely upon you for a compliance with my wishes, the neglect of which could not fail to lower me in the estimation of Mr. Saville, and (which is much worse) in that of my own."

What effect this "preachment," as Mr. Twigg would have called it, eventually had upon Miss Johnstone's conduct after her return to England we may presently see; for the moment, our care is only to wish the kind-hearted creature a pleasant journey to her native country, and all

the happiness which she evidently anticipated in her union with the constant Twigg.

The intelligence of Mr. Smith's death reached Saville before the arrival of Miss Johnstone. A thousand natural feelings filled his mind — his beloved Harriet was free from the chains which had fettered her inclinations; and although the customs of society prescribed rules for the exercise of a proper grief, he could not but consider the demise of her husband as the first step towards the realization of all his hopes, and the consummation of all his earthly happiness.

It was evident that he could not with delicacy take any decided step at the moment; he felt anxious and alarmed for her in her lone and isolated station, not knowing that she was supported by the presence of her mother. But what could *he* do?—he had no pretence to be her champion or protector, and although time might secure his eventual comfort, time was absolutely necessary. He now regretted that he had not strained a point, and written a few words of exculpation to the wife of Smith, which would have been read by her only as his widow. Yet he consoled himself with the assurance that Twigg's explanation must have satisfied Harriet of the real cause of his failure in keeping the appointment at the Isle of Wight, which he had been so anxious to make, and that she must know him too well to attribute his silence to any but its real cause, his anxiety not to subject her even to an imputation of impropriety on his account, while she remained the wife of another.

When Miss Johnstone arrived, and explained not only the actual state of circumstances at Florence, but of the report which Mrs. O'Lollocky had carried thither, Saville's feelings were excited in a very eminent degree; he denounced and anathematized not only himself, the cholera, and the French quarantine laws, but his own timidity, and the old lady's mendacity. His first impulse was to proceed forthwith to Italy; but this scheme he abandoned, because he felt he should needlessly involve himself in contentions with Mrs. O'Lollocky, who, now that she was

married, appeared infinitely more inveterate against him than she ever had been before; while her distaste for him was upon all occasions excited and corroborated by her amiable husband, who hoped, by keeping him off, to secure to himself all the comforts of his daughter-in-law's convenient residence, her easy carriages, and her well-bred horses, which, if she married again, would of course be wrested from him, and both the colonel and his lady agreed, that knowing as they did, the character and disposition of Mrs. Smith, it was only necessary to keep her separate from Saville, to hinder her from again entering into a state in which she had found little but sorrow and vexation. These people, intimate as they were with her, fell into the error which has been before noticed of mistaking gentleness for weakness, and mildness for want of firmness, and under that impression believed they could manage her exactly as they pleased. What their success was, events must show; in the outset of their vice-royalty over her, she seemed implicitly to bow to their will. Still uncertain about Saville, his approaching marriage uncontradicted, she could not venture to rely upon what, in due season, he might do, and therefore until that due season came, when the truth or falsehood of the stories which had been told her would also be proved, she resolved to bear every inconvenience with meekness and patience, and sustain her character of the obedient daughter which she had so truly acted up to, to the day of her marriage; the entirety of her obedience in the last instance, having been preserved, it must be confessed, rather by accident than upon principle.

The viceroys suggested an immediate removal from Florence, the colonel undertaking to transact all the necessary business connected with her accession to a part of the fortune, and some of the estates of her late husband. Smith had left a considerable portion of his property to his own relations; so that, in fact, when things were wound up, it appeared that, besides the house in Buckinghamshire, and that in London, Harriet had about three thousand pounds annual income from the funds, making nearly, one way and another, five thousand a-year.

The Widow, who knew little enough of what are called the ways of the world, had yet a sufficient perception of the sort of man Colonel O'Lollocky was, to desire in her own mind that he should have as little as possible to do with the management of her concerns; the colonel, on the contrary, was all anxiety, civility, and affection, and called her his "little daughter-in-law," his "dear child," and his "sweet love," in a manner so wonderfully warm and easy, that Harriet could scarcely comprehend the character in which the endearing words were addressed to her. Patience was still her motto; and during this reign of encroachment and submission, the notable colonel and his superficial lady firmly believed that they were managing the Widow, and completely superseding Mr. Charles Saville in her thoughts and recollections.

Saville, who was greatly affected by the new imputation of an intended marriage, considered that circumstance, of itself, a sufficient ground for writing a few lines to Harriet, although Miss Johnstone entreated him for her sake to do no such thing. That in the first place, it would prove to Mrs. Smith that she had broken her promise, which, although it was true she had done so, she had done with the best possible intentions; and in the second place, it might expose her late mistress to some unpleasant discussions with her mother and her father-in-law, who would not fail to see and inquire into the particulars of any letter she might receive from England.

Saville—who, the reader must have already perceived, was infinitely more careful of Harriet's happiness than his own — listened to the plausible reasonings of Harriet's *ci-devant* maid; and at length acceded to her earnest request to manage the matter according to her own method, which was to allow *her* to write all the facts of the case to the Widow, stating the nature of the circumstances by which she had ascertained the falsehood of the report of the marriage, and Mr. Saville's anxious desire to have one line of intelligence concerning her views and projected movements, telling her at the same time that it was in compliance with her request that he had not written himself, and begging her, if she had any regard for a gentleman, who was entirely

devoted to her, to commission her in her answer to say something to him to keep up his spirits, or to suggest, if she felt so inclined, the best mode of avoiding the controversy which she was but too certain would arise, if he either went to Florence, or sent her any letters openly; winding up all these statements, petitions, and observations, by declaring her conviction that no man upon earth would more gratefully receive a favourable word or two, or more zealously strive to deserve the preference which it was impossible for her to deny, and which she, "Miss J.," knew her young lady felt for him, beyond all other living beings.

Satisfied with the wisdom and prudence of this half-measure, Saville became considerably tranquillized by the reflection, that, in a few days, Harriet would, upon good authority — the best except his own — be informed of the injury which had been attempted on his character for constancy, and busied himself in looking out for a successor to Twigg, who, in a fortnight, was to leave him in order "to better himself," marry Miss Johnstone, take possession of a tavern in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, and begin life with his dear partner, upon their united funds, the produce of mutual industry and integrity.

Time passed, and Twigg was blessed. The happy couple left town in a one-horse chaise to pass the honey week — for they had not time to make a moon of it — at the Crooked Billet on Penge Common, where they only remained till the next day; both parties being perfectly agreed upon the false delicacy of seclusion, which to them was so novel and uninteresting a system, that six days' residence there would have been a season of gall instead of "treacle," as Lord Byron calls it; they accordingly returned to the metropolis in their buggy, and in a very short time were in active employment in their new vocation.

A month elapsed — not of honey to Saville — before the amiable Mrs. Twigg received any acknowledgment from her late mistress of the budget of news which she had sent her. At last, however, it came; it contained a kind of April scolding, — half clouds, half sunshine, — for

having, as she almost feared, violated all her instructions with regard to Saville, when she saw him; some good advice, and a request that she would write no more.

In one corner were these words, which she desired Mr. Saville might see.

"It is of the greatest consequence to me that I should not receive any letter from Mr. Saville, even if he had any thing to say which should induce him to write. We shall be moving about without any fixed residence, for some months. I should be greatly annoyed if he were to visit the continent. At a future time I shall be most happy to see him, when he can give me all those explanations of his absence from the Isle of Wight which he seems anxious to do. But again I beg of you, if you should accidentally see him, to impress upon him the danger and impolicy of his neglecting my request. Situated as we are, it does not require a correspondence to maintain a friendship. The day will come when less restraint upon my actions may be necessary."

This was all that was wanting to ensure — not his perfect happiness, for *that*, he could not be supposed to enjoy while thus debarred the presence of his beloved — but his confidence in Harriet. It was clear that her position was painful and disagreeable in an eminent degree; but what she said clearly proved that she was aware of the difficulties by which her mother's unfortunate marriage had surrounded her. It also showed that she was firmly resolved to defeat whatever machinations they might be employed upon, and when the time came "which must come," and which Saville construed into the termination of the year of mourning, act with decision and firmness upon the point where her happiness or misery was so deeply concerned.

It is scarcely possible to describe the manœuvres of the gallant colonel; but his last grand *coup* was the introduction of his younger brother, a lieutenant on the half pay of his former regiment, who met the party *unexpectedly* on their way from Rome to Naples, and who was immediately quartered upon Mrs. Smith. It was impossible for her to decline the acquaintance of her mother's brother-in-law, or to refuse him the hospitalities which she had extended to

his brother; but nothing could be more annoying. He was a pert, impertinent, vulgar dandy, than which nothing on earth can be more odious. He was decked out in tawdry chains and rings, all badly made, (some of them of Mosaic gold,) and wore huge bunches of ringlets over his ears, and a Charley on his under lip. Add to this that he smoked incessantly, and repeated jokes said to have been made by eminent persons, at what he was pleased to call "the West End," (all of which had, centuries before his existence, graced the ancient jest books whence Mr. Joseph Miller culled his choicest flowers,) and a pretty fair judgment may be formed of the advantages of his society.

t was evident to Harriet, from the clumsiness of the fellow himself, that it was intended, if she evinced a disposition to marry again, she, like her mother, should become Mrs. O'Lollocky — Mrs. Eneas O'Lollocky it would be. The gallant colonel's first desire was that she should not marry at all, and therefore the first object in having over the lieutenant was that he might act scarecrow, and frighten away the flutterers from the fruit. The secondary point to gain was, that if she married any body, she should marry him.

This "double-barrelled scheme," as the colonel called it, was instantly seen through by the timid Harriet, who resolved that the question should be speedily set at rest; her pride not being less hurt at the supposition that she could ever admit such a person to her heart, than at the flagrant indelicacy of foisting him into the family before the first month of her widowhood had expired.

Of this speculation Saville was, of course, ignorant; but had he been aware of it, his uneasiness would only have been excited for the lady's sake. He had now a regular admission of her feelings, under her own hand; of the needlessness of any correspondence to maintain and keep those feelings alive, and he had only patiently to endure the flight of time, until she should be at liberty to avow her resolution, for the enjoyment of all earthly happiness.

It is true that it required some stretch of philosophy to look forward with calmness to so distant a period: but it was inevitable, and satisfied with the wisdom of his pre-

cautions, he endeavoured to "kill the enemy," as Lieutenant Eneas O'Lollocky would have said, by a constant succession of occupations and amusements, which carried him on to the autumn, when he accepted his annual invitation to Harlingham parsonage, for which place he speedily left town, little expecting that the peaceful dwelling of the parson of the parish was to become the scene of events of the highest importance to his future prospects, and which, whatever the reader may do, he did not at the time of his arrival there, imagine could possibly occur.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

CHAPTER XI.

NOTHING could be prettier than the parsonage at Harlingham. It was situated on a green knoll beyond the church, at about a quarter of a mile's distance from the town, which lay almost buried in the richly-tufted trees that towered round it, so that if it had not been for the blue smoke which "so gracefully curled" in the autumnal evenings, it would never have been known from the parsonage windows that there were any houses there. The town possessed one feature of gaiety not commonly incidental to such retired spots: it was the head-quarters of the reserve companies of regiments on foreign service, and the periodical sound of drums in its streets. and the occasional sight of red coats in its walks and rides, gave an agreeable relief to its otherwise quiet neighbourhood.

To Alvingham's table the military were occasionally invited, and in a circle so easy and agreeable, found a delightful variety to the sameness of a military routine in peace time. The other principal inhabitants, including the 'squire, were similarly disposed to hospitality, and Harlingham was universally known in the army as "good quarters."

In the enjoyment of this charming retirement, Saville rode and read, and walked and talked the hours away; and it required very little pressing on the part of his reverend host to induce him to continue a regimen which appeared so well to agree with his health, bodily and mental. He extended his visit through a period of four months, and at the end of that time only quitted his friends on condition of repeating it very shortly.

Circumstances connected with his own family, however, detained him in London; and although perfectly confident in the truth of his Harriet, his anxiety because he did not hear from her, preyed upon his mind, and occasioned an illness which kept him long confined to his bed; his recovery from which was the signal for his return to the country, where the kind and unaffected Mrs. Alvingham most cordially welcomed the intimate friend of her husband, amiable and agreeable as he was, and rendered so peculiarly interesting to a female heart, by the circumstances of his attachment and disappointment, the subsequent events which had occurred, and the renewed hopes which attended it.

"My dear Mr. Saville," said Mrs. Alvingham, receiving him at the door of the parsonage, "most truly glad am I to see you here once more. Our accounts of you have been dreadfully alarming, — which, however, I should not even now mention to you, if I did not see by your looks and in your manner that all danger was past, and that nothing but quiet and good country air were necessary for your perfect restoration."

"I am not so sure," said Saville, smiling, "that these admirable remedies of themselves will effect a cure. However, we shall see. Where is Alvingham?"

"He is gone shooting with Major Brown," said Mrs. Alvingham.

"And who may Major Brown be?" asked the newly arrived visitor.

"He is the commanding officer here," answered Mrs. Alvingham, "recently returned from India, and appointed to this depôt, where he expects to be fixed for some time. He is an extremely agreeable person, and as I believe, from what I can understand, engaged to be married to a widow lady, somewhere in the country, whither he is almost immediately going in order to fulfil his engagement, and bring back his bride to an extremely pretty cottage which he has just taken; the cottage opposite Williams's," added Mrs. Alvingham; "that one which you said the last time you were here was so beautifully situated."

"Ah, happy man!" said Saville, "every body can fulfil engagements except me."

"And marry widows," said Mrs. Alvingham archly; "and so will *you*, my dear friend. Trust in Providence, and have patience, and your sufferings will be recompensed, and your merits rewarded."

"We shall see," said Saville; "I am a nervous fool, and have my misgivings."

"Recollect the proverb about faint hearts," said Mrs. Alvingham.

"It has no reference to my case," replied Saville.

"Excuse me," said the lady of the house, "you may have won your fair lady already; your courage must be proved——"

"In wearing her," interrupted Charles; "and there," continued he, "is centered all my anxiety. For now twelve months has she been exposed to all the assiduities of a train of lovers, added to the constant attentions of her Irish connection, through her mother's marriage, which I presume continue. Is it not enough to alarm a man conscious, as I am, of the importance of habitual communion with any one object; and aware, as I cannot fail to be, of the genuineness of Harriet's character, and the artless candour with which she would make evident, by her manner, any favourable impression she might receive from the attentions of an agreeable and assiduous admirer?"

"These are all jealous fears and idle fancies," said Mrs. Alvingham, "unworthy of you, believe me. I know nothing of your Mrs. Smith beyond your account of her; but if she be the person you describe, and possess the heart and mind which you attribute to her, you are as secure of her love at a thousand miles' distance as if you were at her elbow."

"Ah!" said Saville, "the distance is not the point,—the time is what I dread. Consider, a whole year."

"A year is but a moment in the scale of constancy," said Mrs. Alvingham. "I'll stake my existence that you will find your 'widow' as constant as 'courage to the brave in battle;' or, to use another and rather more ancient comparison, 'the needle to the pole.'"

"The period she prescribed as one of patience and probation ends this week," said Saville. "I have heard *of* her but three times during the whole of the twelve months; *from* her, not once. I know her mother's temper too well to infringe the rule Harriet laid down about my corresponding with her; and all I have ascertained from others who have accidentally met them on the continent, is, that her determination is to come to England, (now, I suppose, almost immediately,) and establish herself at her house in Buckinghamshire. Another piece of news which I have also learned through the same channel, is, that she has formed an acquaintance with a most agreeable family, of which, to my infinite satisfaction, all the members are females."

"Well, then, my dear Mr. Saville," said Mrs. Alvingham, "with all this satisfactory information, and the certainty of her being in England in so short a time, why worry yourself with groundless apprehensions, and conjure up miseries and misfortunes which never are likely to occur? Pray, do smile, and look a little less lover-like, or ghost-like; for here come the shooters, and I should not like to present you to our new friend with such a melancholy face."

A few moments brought Mr. Alvingham and the major to the drawing-room windows, which opened on the lawn.

"My dear fellow," said the rector, "how happy am I to see you here again; looking, too, so much better than I had hoped, after all we had heard of you."

"Thanks, my kind friend," said Saville; "I have rallied, and am conscious of it."

"And as I tell him," said the rector's lady, "a little of our care will set him all to rights again."

"Allow me to introduce Major Brown to you," said Alvingham. "Major Brown — Mr. Saville."

"Mr. Saville" repeated the Major, starting back involuntarily, "I — am — extremely happy — to" — here a bow, rather formal, evidently constrained, and a sort of muttering, as little intelligible to the company as it seemed intentional on the part of the mutterer, put an end to the ceremony.

"When did you arrive, Charles?" said Alvingham.

"About half an hour since," replied he.

"Did you come from London, sir?" said Brown, eyeing him with an interest so peculiar as to attract the attention of both host and hostess.

"I did," said Saville.

"Town is empty, I suppose?" said Alvingham.

"A desert in its western provinces," replied Saville, but as much crammed with nobodies in the east, as ever."

"For *my* part," said Brown, "I admit an inveterate affection for the metropolis; as *the* Lord Chesterfield said, 'there is no place so good in the winter, and none better in the summer.'"

"Except," said Mrs. Alvingham, "that one would seek the country, for the sake of air."

"Air, my dear madam," said Brown, "upon my honour, I don't see why one should go into the country for air. London is open at top. No, no. Unless called farther afield by duty, I think I never should desire a longer range of country than the space between those mountains of Cockaigne — Blackheath and Richmond Hill."

"You have been much farther lately, Major Brown," said Saville, "at least so I understood from Mrs. Alvingham."

"Yes," said Brown, looking rather confused; — why nobody could guess — "I have——"

"You are just returned from India; are you not?" said Saville.

"I am from India," said the major; "but I have been on the continent latterly; that is to say, I came from India by the Red Sea, to Alexandria, and thence down the Mediterranean to Naples, where I remained a short time, and then proceeded homewards as fast as I could."

"Naples!" muttered Saville, and he cast his eyes upon the fine person of the gallant major, with an inquiring glance. The last time he had heard of Harriet *she* was at Naples.

"I," said Saville, — "I — have some friends at Naples

— at least — I believe they are there — they were, when I heard of them last."

"English?" said Brown.

"Yes," said Saville, "I ——"

"Oh, come, come," said Alvingham, "I'll speak for you. You must know, Major Brown, that this is a sore subject. He is too much interested about it to make inquiries himself. Did you happen to see or hear any thing of a very charming widow of the name of Smith, and her mother and father-in-law, a Colonel O'—— what, Saville?"

"Lollocky," said Charles: so lost in the interest with which he awaited the major's answer, that he was not at all aware of the absurd effect produced by his melancholy pronunciation of the gallant officer's euphonic surname; but which, nevertheless, threw the merry-hearted Mrs. Alvingham into a violent fit of laughter.

The effect produced upon Major Brown by the question was, nevertheless, considerably stronger than might have been anticipated. He stammered out an affirmative, "That he had not only heard of the party, but had seen them, and he believed the lady herself was on her way to this country."

"I told you so, Mr. Saville," said Mrs. Alvingham, — "patience, patience, patience."

"You are intimately acquainted with the family?" asked Major Brown, addressing himself to Charles.

"Oh," said Alvingham, "as I told you before, this is much too tender a subject to touch upon in his present state of health; so let us postpone the discussion until we shall be better prepared to enter upon it — say, after dinner."

Saville, who did not exactly comprehend the nature of the major's intimacy with the Franklins, and who, above all, disliked the embarrassment under which he could not fail to observe that he laboured during this brief dialogue, rejoiced mightily at Alvingham's prudential delay of explanation; and availing himself of his hint, that the dinner hour was approaching, quitted the drawing-room to dress, leaving Alvingham, the major, and the lady together.

"It is curious enough," said Mrs. Alvingham, "that Major Brown should so recently have seen the being, of all others in the world, so interesting to poor Mr. Saville."

"It is exceedingly strange," replied the gallant officer, "but such things will occur in this life. He seems extremely gentlemanly and agreeable."

"Seen, too," said his ardent champion, Mrs. Alvingham, "to such a disadvantage. His health shockingly impaired by his anxiety respecting this very lady, to whom he is devotedly attached; and his spirits, once gay and buoyant in the highest degree, broken by his disappointment, and the extraordinary mishaps which have befallen him in the course of his attachment, he is scarcely like the being he was a year and a half ago."

"You have known him some time?" said the major.

"I have known him from boyhood," said Alvingham; "we were at school and at college together — a more honourable, better-hearted creature does not exist; and I am sure, if the lady is as constant as she ought to be, the termination of their attachment will be a life of perfect happiness."

During this conversation, the attention of the major to the subject of it, evidently proclaimed an interest far beyond that, which could have been produced by a short and casual acquaintance with the widow and her family; and when Alvingham pronounced the words which have been last recorded, his agitation became perceptible, not only to Mrs. Alvingham, who had been more attentively watching the working of his countenance, but to her husband. The major seemed as anxious now to escape from the topic, as Saville had been a few minutes before; and abruptly looking at his watch, pronounced the time to be within half an hour of dinner; and seeing that he had to go to his lodging — for he had not yet taken possession of his cottage — to dress and return, there were but a few minutes to spare; accordingly he departed; and as soon as he had quitted the room, Mrs. Alvingham said to her husband, in a prophetic tone —

"William, I would lay my life our friend Major Brown will turn out to be a rival of poor Charles."

"If so," said Alvingham, "after all we have heard of his plans and prospects, he must be a successful one."

"What an unpleasant circumstance — to think that they should meet here!"

"Well, my love," said Alvingham, "recollect that we have no ground for believing it to be the case. The marriage of the major may not be connected with the Franklin family at all; and, at all events, don't let either of us awaken a suspicion upon the subject in Saville's mind. A few days may let us more into the secret; time will develop all; and, of course, if the case should eventually turn out, as it seems just probable it may, the major will come to some explanation upon the subject, and we shall be better able to meet the difficulties, and assuage the grief of our poor friend, who, in that case, will of course leave us, before the major returns from his matrimonial expedition to settle in Harlingham."

"Oh, my dear life!" said Mrs. Alvingham, "you *are* going too fast; I only suggested the possibility that such an unhappy circumstance might take place: recollect, as you say, we have no ground for suspecting it, except the major's evident agitation; but, dear me! do not let us encourage any fears upon so slight a foundation."

The second dinner bell (rung even before they had gone to dress) put an end to this conversation, which, however, had a sequel before the happy couple made their re-appearance in the drawing-room; in which both the rector and his lady had resolved, and pledged themselves mutually, not to take the slightest notice of what had passed, or even touch upon the subject of the Franklins, or of Naples, or of Harriet, unless one or other of their visitors first broached it.

Their compact was scarcely necessary. Saville, from fear and delicacy, did not recur to any of these, to him vital topics, nor did Brown; but it was impossible for the host and hostess not to perceive the most striking change in the deportment of the latter from that which he had hitherto adopted in their society. His spirits appeared subdued, his manner to Saville was remarkably kind, he seemed to watch every word that he uttered with a scru-

pulously attentive care, almost unaccountable, never making the slightest allusion to any circumstance bearing upon the point most interesting to Charles, who, as we have already seen, (from different motives, perhaps,) did not venture to refer to it even distantly.

The evening was passed differently from any evening during which Major Brown had been a visitor at the Parsonage before; and, in spite of all the meritorious efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Alvingham, it was impossible to dissipate a gloom which seemed to hang over the whole party, not one of them exactly knowing the cause of the evident dulness which had overcome the others.

At breakfast next morning, Alvingham expected Saville would have said something respecting Brown's acquaintance with the family; but he was disappointed. Saville spoke of the major as an extremely agreeable person; but, either it had not struck him that he had been particularly intimate with Harriet's party when at Naples, or he had determined not to subject himself to the ridicule of Mrs. Alvingham, by exhibiting any symptoms of jealousy or mistrust of his beloved, in consequence. The fact was, that he was dying to get a little more information out of the major, and not able to set about it, lest he should hear something likely to disturb his peace of mind, and perhaps overthrow the whole fabric of his hopes.

He, therefore, like his friends, resolved upon trying what time would do; and whether, in the course of a few days, opportunities might not occur for drawing out the gallant officer, and obtaining a clearer view of the real state of parties. Alvingham had made up his mind that they should see no more of the major; for, recollecting some of the circumstances which had occurred, he at once settled the question in his own mind, and set down the major as *the* man.

Upon what grounds all these different speculations were bottomed it is impossible to guess, nor can we yet say what might have caused the agitation and subsequent melancholy of the gallant officer; certain it is, that, so far from absenting himself — so far from shrinking, or skulking, or showing any marks of sorrow or anger, he was at the parsonage just

at luncheon-time; and, as usual, sauntered about till it was time to take his daily ride; from which he returned, and sauntered again with Saville himself.

During this stroll their conversation, drawn to the subject, in the first instance, by the beauty of the scenery around them, turned upon pictures. Saville had not only great taste, but considerable skill as a draftsman, (not perhaps in equity, but in water-colours;) the major was a proficient in the art. Of course, this community of accomplishment led to discussions, and remarks, and observations, which terminated by the major's begging Saville to call on him the next day at his quarters, in order to look over his *portefeuille*, which contained some specimens too large to be moved conveniently to the parsonage.

"I have found," said the major, "infinite delight and comfort in my pencil. The greater part of my military life, except the short period of a local war in India, has been passed in peace. The great Duke had consummated all that was to be done, while I was yet a young subaltern; and thus my otherwise tedious hours of mere routine duty, which I have enlivened and given interest to by drawing, formed, instead of a dreary waste in existence, one of its happiest portions; and I am rewarded with a collection of records, to me invaluable."

"You are about to settle in this neighbourhood, I think," said Saville.

"Yes," answered the major. "I have secured that pretty cottage, but the most valuable part of its furniture has not yet arrived. I suppose the Alvinghams have told you that I am on the point of marriage — of course to the most charming of her sex, as all bachelors' wives are; however, as you are likely to be a fixture here, I shall perhaps have the pleasure of introducing her to you. I don't think, for a man with a sketching mania upon him, any part of England can afford better opportunities for indulging in his madness than this very spot."

"When do you think of going, Major Brown?" said Saville.

"In a very few days," replied the major. "I am in

hopes, if I can get leave, of starting for Buckinghamshire on Tuesday or Wednesday."

"Buckinghamshire!" — said Saville, "are you aware that the Mrs. Smith whom you met in Naples has a house in Buckinghamshire?"

"Yes," said the major, his cheeks colouring to the deepest crimson — "yes — it's — yes — the same county — yes — exactly ——"

"Perhaps," said Saville, "I should not be asking too much of your kindness, if you should happen to be in that part of the country, to inquire whether she is returned. You know them, and, perhaps——"

"Yes!" said the major, "I — I know them — certainly, yes — and of course shall make a point of seeing them, if — that is — if they should have arrived."

"I am most anxious for news of them," said Saville. "I fear, from what I have heard, that the husband of the widow's mother is not a very happy acquisition to the family; he has a younger brother, too."

"Oh," said Brown, "yes — Mr. Eneas O'Lollocky — true. He was not with them when I was at Naples. I believe, from what I heard then, that he had gone the length of something very like making an offer to Mrs. Smith, which, luckily for her, brought the acquaintance to a speedy termination, and justified her in 'warning him off.'"

"It is a melancholy thing," said Saville, "to see a woman at Mrs. Franklin's time of life hazarding her comfort, and overthrowing her respectability, by such a marriage."

"Yes," said Brown; "so it is — so it is; but not more absurd, — when absurdity was the order of the day, — than her daughter marrying Smith."

"Then, perhaps," said Saville, "if you should not return immediately, you would write me one line, just to say if she is at her own place."

"You shall hear from me," said Brown, "depend upon it. I am not so entirely devoted to my own interests, but I can spare time to communicate with a gentleman whose acquaintance, I honestly and sincerely declare, I am most

happy to have made. Now, pray remember to-morrow —at one; if I am not in, do me the favour to wait. I will leave the *portefeuilles* out, so that if my drawings can afford you any amusement, you may entertain yourself, in case I should be delayed in my return, by duty."

The acceptance of this invitation concluded the dialogue between the gentlemen, just as some of the neighbours joined them; and Brown being engaged to dine at some distance from Harlingham took his leave. A detail of what had taken place between them, which Saville subsequently gave to Alvingham, greatly relieved the mind of the latter, who saw in what had occurred the most satisfactory annihilation of all his doubts and fears respecting the dreaded rivalry between them. This raised the rector's spirits, *his* good spirits infected his wife, and Saville, cheered by the prospect of early intelligence, and from the best authority, of all he valued in the world, seemed to emulate the gaiety of his friends.

The morning came—and punctual to his appointment, Saville proceeded to the major's lodgings, (in military phraseology, quarters,) which, in fact, consisted of the first-floor of the library, blest resort of idlers, which graced the main street of Harlingham. As Brown had suspected might be the case, he was not at home, but the servant had orders to invite Mr. Saville up stairs, which instructions he fulfilled, and Saville, in pursuance of his acceptance of the delegated bidding, mounted the small staircase and entered the front drawing-room, where, according to promise, lay the huge receptacles of the absent host's performances.

According to his new friend's suggestion, he opened the first collection, and was delighted, if not surprised, to find some views in water-colours, executed with all the power of our best masters. Some Indian scenery, which would have done credit to Westall; and some Italian subjects, of which neither Turner nor Calcott need have been ashamed.

Having satisfied himself with examining minutely the contents of the first volume of these splendid sketches, Saville prepared to remove it to another table, or rather escritoire, in order to make room for a second detachment of drawings; in

doing which, he somewhat awkwardly upset a small writing desk, or as it is technically called by cabinet-makers, a slope, which stood upon the flat part of the larger piece of furniture. Vexed at his excessive awkwardness, as he considered it, he hastily scrambled up the papers which had been under it, in order to restore them to their places: judge then—oh! sensitive reader—his horror, his wonder, his agony, when he found amongst them, an open letter directed to his gallant host, in the hand-writing of his own Harriet—the post-mark, Wycombe—the seal, "*dinna forget.*"

Here was a situation in which to be placed! What on earth could he do? Read the letter he dare not — degrade himself by spying into the private concerns of a man who, in the warmth of friendship and esteem, had confided to him the charge of every thing belonging to him—he must not! Yet how could he see, how could he speak to that man, while yet a doubt remained upon his mind, like that which the sight of this hateful document had excited!

Honour, propriety, honesty, demanded that he should instantly replace the paper where it had been before the overthrow of the desk; yet love, exasperation, madness perhaps, stood in the way between him and the fulfilment of what was right, and just, and honourable, and honest. The trial was too great, the temptation too strong; jealousy, and all its accessories, filled his mind; and scarcely thinking what he did, or what the enormity of his conduct, he paused before he put the paper down, and casting a look of guilty consciousness around him, dared to sacrifice his principle to his passion and open the letter, in which he was rewarded for his defection from the high path of honour, by reading as follows:—

"Melcombe House, Thursday.

"My dearest George,

"We have reached this safely, and I am much more pleased with the place than I had hoped to be. I have not a moment to spare, except to announce our arrival, or I shall lose the post. Mamma and the colonel positively leave me next Tuesday; Maria remains. Pray, pray remember your promise, so fervently made at Naples, and

come to me as soon as possible. In your affection, my dear George, I look for every thing that is to comfort and support me. Whatever arrangements you have made with regard to a house, they will be quite acceptable. Your comfort and convenience must be in all things first attended to; and as for situation or convenience, a fond and dutiful wife will never complain, or even question her husband's will and wishes. I am delighted to be once more in England; but my happiness will not be complete until I see you, and endeavour to secure your happiness.

"Ever, dear George, your affectionately attached

"HARRIET SMITH."

This was the climax — now could he readily account for the agitation which his *friend* — friend indeed! evinced when expressing his belief that he should see the widow when he was in Buckinghamshire! Why, he was going direct to her house, at her own earnest bidding, to marry her and bring her in triumph to Harlingham. "Never!" thought Saville; "this day ends the life of one of us — this day decides her fate — false, fickle, faithless she!" Yet stay, stay; Saville, with all his natural anger, must stifle these feelings, and swallow all the indignities of Harriet, and endure all the duplicity of Brown. How had he obtained the intelligence of the falsehood of the one, or the hypocrisy of the other? — by an act which he dare not confess!

Would Brown condescend to notice or meet the man, who, coming to his house an invited guest, had debased himself by prying into his private letters? Letters so private, it seems, that they were hidden away out of sight — for who would believe the story which Saville should seem to invent of the accident by which this epistle was brought to his view? Neither dare he venture to ask commiseration from Alvingham or his wife — he could not explain to either of them the means of his enlightenment; no, he was doomed to all the pangs of silent consciousness of misery, and all the throes of stifled grief and restrained revenge.

What! could she be so false — so fickle — and yet so fair?

" She's lost! She's gone — the beauty of the earth,
All that in woman could be virtue called,
Is lost! — corrupted are her noble faculties,
The temper of her soul is quite infected,
Inconstancy has spotted all her white, her virgin beauties."

The reader may easily understand the nature of the feelings under which Saville was labouring, as he replaced the odious letter, and made immediate preparations for quitting the house: in effecting the former object he succeeded; but in the latter, he was most notably defeated by the inopportune arrival of the major, who had picked up Alvingham in the street, and brought him home with him.

" How wretchedly ill you look," said Alvingham to Saville.

" Why," said the major, " you are as pale as death; have some wine — some brandy — something."

" No," said Saville, " I have had enough — I — these — views, which I have been looking at, have recalled circumstances to my memory — that ——"

" I thought," said the major, " that you had not travelled much on the continent."

" No, I have not," stammered the unhappy victim to his own want of discretion — " but — there are persons dear to me, who ——"

" Ah," interrupted Brown, " I know; you told me, the Franklin party — at least the lovely widow Smith.

Immeasurable villany — unparalleled deceiver, *thought* Saville — bursting to disclose all he knew, and rush upon his victim, his betrayer.

" I went upon one or two excursions with them," said the major, " but I had not much time to spare, because I was most anxious to make my arrangements about the reserve companies here, previously to my marriage."

Saville could scarcely remove his eyes from the present object of his detestation; a detestation not excited merely by jealousy, but by the contempt which such callous, such wanton duplicity could not fail to produce. And yet he was tongue-tied, fettered, manacled, by his own inexcusable conduct with regard to the letter.

" These," said Brown, turning over the pages of the

portefeuille, "are more interesting than the Italian views. These are drawings made in the Tyrol, and are, I believe, many of them of points and places hitherto untouched. The valley of the Adige from Roveredo to Botzen is full of interest. This is a view of Mount Brenner, and all these sketches were made on the banks of the river between that and Roveredo itself."

Had they been views of Fleet Ditch before the improvements which now veil it from our sight had obliterated all traces of its course, save, indeed, where civic patriotism has raised two lamp-posts to the honour of Wilkes and Waithman, they would have been to Saville just as interesting, or at all events not less so. All he saw dancing before his eyes as they glanced over the paper were the lines of Harriet's letter, addressed to the gallant and accomplished artist who was exhibiting them. Those lines were engraven on his heart and fixed upon his sight, and all his mind was occupied in calculating what means he could adopt to punish the treachery of the major without exposing his own.

It surprised Brown to find the eloquent and enthusiastic amateur of the preceding day, metamorphosed into a dull, unobservant inspector of his performances; and he could not help attributing the alteration to some bodily ill, to which his new friend had become obnoxious since they separated. Saville's observations were few, his agitation remarkable, and when at length he quitted the major's lodgings, man as he was, his feelings found relief in a flood of tears.

"What *is* all this, Charles?" said Alvingham, "have you heard any bad news from Italy?"

"None, none," said Saville; "but I am sure—I know my doom is sealed, and that I am destined to be the most miserable of men. However, if I am correct in my suspicions, the day of retribution will come — shall come — it may be late—too late to save my happiness, but it will yet be in time to punish my betrayers."

"What ridiculous crotchet have you got into your head now?" said Alvingham, suspecting in a moment that what had first caused his alarm with respect to the major's

attachment had now struck Saville; and coupling the circumstances of the interview which he had with Brown on the preceding day, and his embarrassment which Saville had described to him after dinner, with what he and his wife had previously noticed, he began to think that his worst suspicions were really well founded — it could be nothing else. But Saville remained silent as to the true cause of his distraction, for the same reason which forced him to stifle his resentment.

Should he write to Harriet, should he fly to her on the instant? He knew she was in England, he even knew her address; yet how could he account for the possession of that knowledge? There again was he checked; and again felt, deeply and poignantly, the baleful effects of the slightest deviation from the straight and open path of honour. Yet, thought he, had I not been driven by desperation, caused by her neglect, to do this shabby thing, I might have lived on, a deluded happy victim, until I saw the faithless creature's marriage to this man announced in the public newspapers.

All efforts to console or reason with him were unavailing: even Mrs. Alvingham, with all her sweetness of disposition and earnestness of manner, could not succeed in either extracting the reason for his despair, or its immediate cause. She charged him with having "dreamt a dream," which augured unpropitiously, or having seen some sight, or heard some sound, which he had construed into a presage of misfortune. Raillery, however, had as little effect as persuasion; and Saville retired to his room early, completely beaten by the events of the day, the nature of which nothing of course could induce him to disclose.

CHAPTER XII.

"THE trouble's a pleasure, Major Brown," said Mrs. Alvingham to the gallant officer, who, so soon as breakfast-time, and even before the appearance of Saville below stairs, was at the Parsonage, soliciting its kind-hearted

mistress to take the trouble, as he called it, of occasionally looking in at the preparations in progress for the reception of himself and his bride at the cottage, during his excursion into Buckinghamshire, whence he was to return a Benedick. He had taken the last moment, early as it was in the day, to bid his hospitable friends adieu; his leave of absence had arrived by the morning's post, and his horses were ordered for his immediate departure.

"So," said Alvingham, when Saville entered the breakfast-room, "our agreeable friend the major is off; he desired me to say you should hear from him in a few days."

"Major Brown," said Saville, trembling with mental excitement and bodily weakness, "is, as I believe, a villain."

"Mr. Saville," said Mrs. Alvingham, who heard his violent expression with scarcely less alarm than she beheld the effect produced upon her visitor by the effort to denounce him, "why should you speak thus of a gentleman, whose conduct, during his residence here, has been unexceptionable; whom we hope to reckon amongst our most agreeable neighbours; and who, certainly, as far as you are personally concerned, deserves your esteem and friendship, by the manner in which upon all occasions he speaks of you?"

"Does he speak well of *me?*" said Saville—"then he is a hypocrite into the bargain."

"What, my dear Saville," said Alvingham, "can induce you to launch out into these invectives, the moment after his departure, against a man with whose conversation and society you only yesterday morning expressed yourself so much pleased?"

"Alvingham," said Charles, "it is useless to talk upon this subject. I have the strongest grounds for the language I use, but circumstances must keep me silent. I must appear blind to all that is passing. The time, however, *will* come — must come — when, although too late to save me from misery, his duplicity shall be unmasked, and, please God, revenged, by me."

"Saville," said Alvingham, "I must not hear this; the

name of our Creator and Preserver must not be profaned by such an application; nor can I permit you for a moment to fancy yourself justified in thus talking of revenging your wrongs upon a fellow-creature for an imaginary or even a real injury. If you believe yourself ill-treated, it is natural that you should feel resentment; but resentment and revenge are widely different from each other: revenge is the result of meanness — of your character, Charles, meanness forms no component principle; I cannot, therefore, endure to hear you talk of it, much less coupled with an appeal to your Maker."

"Ah!" said Saville, "could you know all that I know, you would not wonder at my excitement or want of caution — it is a tale of horror, wretchedness, and woe."

The manner in which Saville pronounced these last words, seriously alarmed Mrs. Alvingham, who apprehended the most frightful results from the irritation under which she saw him labouring. Nor was she far wrong in those apprehensions. Although the weakness of his constitution, deteriorated as it had been by his recent illness, gave surety against the worst consequence which she had anticipated, he grew weaker and fainter during the day, and early in the evening was removed to his bed, the village apothecary and the physician of the district having both been called to his assistance.

For three or four days the result of his attack was extremely doubtful; but skill and a rigid attention to regimen, under the directions of his medical attendants, so far restored him by the end of the week, that he was able again to appear in the drawing-room, and even sit at table, although a settled melancholy, which had superseded the violent excitement of mind under which he had at first laboured, rendered him a silent and almost unconscious observer of what was passing around him.

On the evening of the tenth day from the time of Brown's departure, Mr. Alvingham received a letter from that gentleman, which ran as follows: —

"Wycombe —

"My dear Sir, — I have delayed fulfilling my pro-

mise of writing to you, until I could with certainty give you an account of my intended movements. I have now completed most of my arrangements, and accordingly trouble you with the detail.

"It may, perhaps, have appeared strange to you, that I should never myself have mentioned any of the particulars of my approaching marriage; there were reasons which induced me to refer to it as seldom and as slightly as possible. You will, I am sure, rejoice to know that all difficulties are now smoothed away, and that I purpose being with my future wife at Harlingham on Monday next, where, at my wish, she has consented that you should unite us by a special licence, which I have procured for the purpose. From Harlingham we shall start on a short tour, and she will have had the double advantage of making your acquaintance and that of Mrs. Alvingham, and of seeing the residence which is so soon afterwards to become her own.

"Your friend, Mr. Saville, requested me before my departure, to give him some account of Mrs. Smith, of whom he spoke in terms of regard and friendship. It was your having previously informed me of the real state of his feelings with respect to that lady, that kept me silent and reserved upon that point, and which now prevents my writing directly to him. It is, however, my duty to inform you — leaving it to your discretion to make him acquainted with the circumstance or not — that my connection with Mrs. Smith was of an infinitely earlier date than his acquaintance with her.

"Notwithstanding her mother's influence over her is naturally very great, I attribute her consent to her marriage with the late Mr. Smith entirely to the circumstance of my being abroad. I knew only of the marriage after it had been concluded, and of course too late to interpose my claim to attention in opposition to it.

"I think it my duty to state, that since the death of her late husband, I have succeeded in prevailing upon her to marry again; and I hope that Mr. Saville will not object to meet her upon the happy occasion of our visit to your house, where, as I have already said, I shall require

your professional aid to complete my happiness. Upon so short an acquaintance as mine with Mr. Saville, I should certainly not venture upon this request, but Harriet most earnestly joins me in making it.

"I trust we shall not inconvenience you by our invasion of the parsonage. Our stay will be short; but nothing will give me more pleasure than returning to your delightful neighbourhood, and remaining there so long as the rules of the service will permit, satisfied that, in the future Mrs. Brown, I shall bring to the circle of your agreeable society, a valuable, and, I trust, an estimable addition.

"With my best compliments to Mrs. Alvingham, and your friend, Mr. Saville, believe me, my dear sir,

"Yours, very faithfully,

"GEORGE BROWN."

"My love," said Alvingham to his wife, after reading the letter, "what is to be done? — poor Charles's worst suspicions about the major are realised, and the duplicity of his behaviour towards him is aggravated a hundred-fold, by this most extraordinary proposal of making a triumphant display of his success, here in our house, and in Saville's presence."

"It is extremely odd," replied the lady. "I feared, from the major's evident embarrassment, when he first met Mr. Saville, that it was so; but can it be possible, even if *he* could in so unprovoked a manner wish to insult a defeated rival that such a woman as they both describe Mrs. Smith to be, could be induced to agree to so indelicate, so barbarous a measure?"

"He must be mad," said Alvingham, "and she too! If Saville were not here, nothing could be more agreeable to us, nothing more natural in them, than honouring me by a preference in performing the ceremony; by which arrangement, as he says, she could see her house in time to suggest any alterations or new arrangements, before her arrival as a permanent resident in it. What's to be done? — this is Saturday — there is not time to hinder their coming."

"There is but one thing, I think, to do," said Mrs.

Alvingham; "state the circumstances to Mr. Saville, and let him decide for himself——"

"And perhaps," interrupted Alvingham, "have my house made the scene of conflict and even bloodshed! for to what act of desperation may not poor Charles be driven, if he sees his betrothed and affianced, as he really believed her to be, the bride of another, and that other professing to be his friend?"

"It is quite impossible, my love," said Mrs. Alvingham, "that we can turn Mr. Saville out of the house. What can we say to him but the truth, to account for a desire to be rid of him all of a sudden, when our invitation was unlimited as to extent?"

"Perhaps, my dear," said Alvingham, who was all for a quiet life, and dreaded the idea of a rencontre between the rivals, "perhaps it *will* be best to let him know the worst at once; one thing is certain, as I have just said; it is perfectly impossible to stop their coming;—here, this is Saturday, and one day only intervenes: no post goes out to-night from this; and if it did, theirs is a cross-road, so that no letter would catch them—their arrival is, therefore, inevitable."

"I should really think," said Mrs. Alvingham, whose apprehensions of consequences were greatly augmented by perceiving the expression of her dear husband's countenance, "that the very circumstance of Mrs. Smith's wishing to come here to be married, would cure Charles of his passion. What can the woman mean—is she distracted?"

"It is most extraordinary conduct," replied the rector; "and so incompatible with the gentle, generous feelings by which women are universally actuated, as to be perfectly unaccountable. Besides, that she *was* attached to him is most certain; her readiness to elope—her confessions of regard—her request that he would abstain from any correspondence likely to interfere with the ultimate success of their affection——"

"All *that* must have arisen from some mistake or misrepresentation of her maid, of whom Charles Saville speaks," said Mrs. Alvingham. "Recollect, she never wrote to him herself; he has no pledge—no promise of hers."

"Nor is it likely he would have had," said Alvingham, "if, as the major says, his connection with her is of much earlier date than Saville's acquaintance. However, it is useless our arguing; it matters little what view *we* take of the subject,—the main point is to ascertain how Saville will choose to act upon the information of their intended proceedings, which we have no means of checking or preventing."

"Go to him, William," said Mrs. Alvingham, "show him the letter, and talk the matter over. In my opinion, he is too ill to leave us, let him feel as he may. To be sure, there is no necessity for his meeting the party, because he happens to be in the house. Go then, dear, and see, and arrange it with him."

"I will immediately," replied her husband; "he is in his room, but not yet, as I think, gone to rest,—at least, if rest he ever obtains in bed; I fear his nights are sleepless as his days are wretched. If he appears unwilling to enter upon the question this evening, I will only open the business to him, and give him the night to consider what course he will eventually pursue, under circumstances which, I confess, appear to me to be as extraordinary as any that man was ever placed in."

"The first shock will be the greatest," said Mrs. Alvingham; "I mean the realisation of what I thought your groundless anticipation of the widow's being the intended wife of the major — that will be the blow. If he have strength to bear that, I *do* think he will have sufficient fortitude to witness the sequel with comparative calmness — I am sure I should if I were he."

"I'll go to him this moment," said Alvingham; "wait till I come down; if he should still be up, and I want an advocate, come to us when I send for you. I have always found that women's are the wisest heads in such critical conjunctures as these."

Mrs. Alvingham accepted her husband's retainer in the cause with an assenting smile, and waited for some time in expectation of being called in to counsel. At length a servant announced that his master would be glad if she would step up" stairs; and having obeyed his commands, and

proceeded to the sitting-room of the invalid, was most agreeably surprised by the manner in which he received her, and by the firm and assured appearance of his countenance.

"He knows all, my love," said Alvingham; "and has already made up his mind what to do."

"To leave us, I fear?" said Mrs. Alvingham.

"By no means," said Saville, "unless you wish it. In the first place, as I hear you have already suggested, there is no absolute necessity for my seeing any of the party, if I should decide upon secluding myself; but, in the next place, if it be possible that Harriet, after having, by the most extraordinary conduct of which woman was ever guilty, violated all the ties which are supposed to bind hearts, and minds, and feelings, and affections, really desires to consummate all her crimes — for what else can I call them? — by a triumphant and immodest display of the success of her schemes, I think I have sufficient pride, not only to bear the sight of such an exhibition with firmness, but even to despise the principal exhibitor in it."

"Ah, you must not trust to *that*," said Mrs. Alvingham.

"But indeed I may," said Saville. "And as for the history of your friend Major Brown having a prior claim upon her, is it likely that I should not have heard her mother, who was fonder of bragging of her daughter's attractive powers than doing anything else in the world, swell the list of her admirers with *his* name?"

"Why," said Alvingham, who was delighted to see the turn Saville's feelings had taken, "by way of a name, Charles, Brown would not go for much in such a list."

"As good as Smith, at any rate," said Saville, the milk of whose disposition appeared suddenly to have turned to gall. "No, Alvingham; you, and my dear friend here, may give me credit for affection and devotion which I have long cherished for Harriet Franklin; I admit them — I glory in them! — because those feelings resulted from an esteem for her character, her principles, and her ingenuousness; but you must also give me credit for something better than blindness and fatuity. The moment all these attributes are falsified, and the veil is withdrawn, I can see

as plainly as my neighbours; and were she here this moment——"

"You would fall at her feet," said Alvingham, "and beg pardon for having even doubted her."

"What! on the eve — on the day of her marriage to another man!" said Saville. "No — no — it is all too plain, too palpable — I may be wretched, but I will never be contemptible. Let them come — I may not see them, or I may, as the humour takes me; but as I have reasons for knowing that her attachment to this major, whether the beginning of the acquaintance be recent or remote, is both ardent and strong, I do assure you, if my animal strength hold out, I shall as calmly and quietly give them the meeting, as if I had never seen either of them before."

"I am absolutely delighted," said Alvingham, "at this display of reason and resolution. Let them come then — you will be at liberty to act as you please; all I entreat is, that no intemperance — no rashness ——"

"No, no!" said Saville, "rely upon me. So long as I believed her devoted to me, and married to another against her will — so long as I thought she still retained the affection for me, which she had not hesitated to express — so long was I utterly and entirely hers, and in danger or to the death would I have vindicated my claim to her heart; but, knowing the character of her attachment to another, I ——"

"But how do you know *that*, Mr. Saville?" said Mrs. Alvingham.

"Ay, that's a secret," replied Saville, a blush suffusing his still pale cheek; "but, no matter — I know — I am in possession of that part of the history; and being so, feel released from every tie, except indeed those of which I cannot so easily rid myself; while I hold, that I should be the maddest fool that ever lived to quarrel with her favoured lover, who, if he did win her before I knew her, had really a prior claim to her heart; and who, if he has won her since I left her, knew nothing of *me*, nor was aware that he was wounding me in the tenderest point, and destroying my only chance of happiness on earth."

"You are now," said Alvingham, "exactly in the temper of mind in which I wished to find you. No more visions of revenge haunt you; you see plainly the circumstances as they have arisen; and, although you feel them as a man, like Shakspeare's hero, you are resolved 'to bear them like a man.' — Come, my love," continued he, addressing his anxious wife, "we will not keep him up any longer: I am sure I can rely upon him now; and I think it will be a triumph worthy of him, to let his false fair one see that the effects of her infidelity are yet to be overcome."

The worthy couple quitted the room, and retired to their own apartment; but Mrs. Alvingham, who saw, in the hollow eye and sunken cheek of poor Saville, sad evidence of the ravages which mental anxiety had made, differed a little with her husband, as to the conclusive testimony which his personal appearance would afford to the innocuous character of Mrs. Smith's extraordinary vacillation.

During the Sunday, Saville remained calm and quiet; he attended church morning and afternoon, and seemed deeply to feel those parts of the service which might be supposed to apply to the temporal afflictions of mankind; but it was quite evident to Alvingham and his wife, that he had devoted that sacred day to the regulation of his mind, and a suitable preparation for a trial, such as few men were ever subjected to, and such as still fewer would, as he had done, voluntarily consent to sustain.

When Monday came, it must be confessed that the party at the Parsonage were each of them agitated in an eminent degree. Mrs. Alvingham was kept in a constant flutter by the apprehension of the arrival of her new visitors; bound, as she felt herself, to be extremely civil and courteous, and with the prospect of having the faithless fair one a neighbour, for some time after her marriage, being, at the same time, most desperately prejudiced against her. — Alvingham continued in constant communication with Saville, sensitively alive to the delicacy of his situation, and still apprehending that the sight of the major would fire the train and explode all his anger and resentment, now rendered more powerful than ever by compression; while Saville himself, resolved in his purpose, continued pacing his room inces-

santly; looking from its windows to the gates of the Parsonage, whenever he heard "the sound of coaches."

They had not said at what time they would arrive. Breakfast was prepared — served — but not eaten. Noon came. Every carriage that passed along was fancied into theirs. But no! the noise died away — another succeeded, but with no more decisive results; till, about half past two, a sharp ringing at the gate startled the whole family, and filled the rector, his wife, and friend, with a sensation not unlike that which agitated the heart of the fair Imogene, when —

"The bell of the castle tolled one."

The bustle of the servants hurrying to the door was accompanied by the rolling of wheels, and in less than a minute, an elegant travelling carriage was drawn up, "short and smart," to the entrance of the peaceful residence, on the steps of which stood the reverend master of the house, to receive his unwelcome visitors.

Mrs. Alvingham remained, scarcely conscious whether she was standing on her head or her heels, in the drawing-room, looking as pale as death, and trembling from head to foot. Saville was at one of the windows of his room, hidden carefully behind the blind — thence he saw the major step from the chariot, and hand from it a delicate young lady, who was, doubtless, acting as bridesmaid; and then, he saw — so long, at least, as his eyes could bear the sight — his Harriet — *his* Harriet — how his? — why call her so? — why think her so? — accept the proffered hand of her "dearest George," and undergo the ceremony of presentation to her reverend host.

He saw no more. All the firmness — all the resolution — all the contempt which for two days he had been nourishing, vanished at the moment with the sight of every thing around; and he sank upon the sofa in an agony of grief, and hiding his head in his hands gave vent to his sorrow in a copious flood of tears.

Meanwhile the bride and her friend had been introduced to Mrs. Alvingham, whose surprise, when she saw the lovely Harriet agitated beyond measure, was perhaps, not great,

considering all the circumstances of the case, and the curious position in which she had thought proper to place herself; but she was not prepared, even by Saville's description, for any thing half so beautiful. As for Harriet herself, she could not speak, but having pressed Mrs. Alvingham's hand, sank upon a chair in a state of insensibility. Her fair assistant, whose emotions were by no means of so violent a character, entreated Mrs. Alvingham to leave her to herself for a few moments; the excitement was too much for her, but she would soon recover.

Why in the name of common sense, thought the lady of the house, did she expose herself to any thing so agitating? She, however, obeyed the injunctions of Mrs. Smith's travelling companion, to whom she spoke of their journey and made inquiries how long they had been on the road, and whether they found it agreeable travelling; during which forced and senseless conversation Harriet sufficiently recovered her presence of mind to look round the room and inquire where "her dear George was."

Dear George, it appears, was closeted with Mr. Alvingham, making the necessary arrangements for the ceremony which was to secure his happiness; and the widow, it must be confessed, seemed "nothing loth" to expedite the proceedings. The major soon returned — but without the rector — who, it seemed, was gone to Saville's room to announce the arrival of the party, and inquire if he could bear the interview — a meeting which he was commissioned by the major to say was absolutely necessary to the completion of the contract into which he was about to enter, as there were explanations to be made which could only be made to him personally, and without which it was impossible Harriet herself could be satisfied.

"George," said Mrs. Smith, "where is your friend Mr. Alvingham gone?"

"To apprise *your* friend, Mr. Saville, of our arrival, my love," said the major.

"And will he come? — how can I bear it?" sobbed the widow, clinging closely to her beloved George, as she again called him.

"He *will* come, rely upon it," said the major. "Nay he is here."

Saville entered the room calmly and steadily, as pale as death, but without the discomposure of a feature. Harriet turned to see him, and uttered a shriek so loud and piercing, that it struck into the very hearts of those who heard it.

"Mrs. Alvingham," said the major — "Louisa — support her — I did not expect this."

"Oh, Charles," said Mrs. Smith, recovering after a moment, "how can I justify myself for this conduct?"

Saville stood amazed, while his once loved Harriet clung to the major, and hid her burning cheeks in his bosom.

"Why, in the name of Heaven, am I brought hither?" said Saville, his eyes flashing fire.

"To receive a treasure," said Alvingham, "which your merits and constancy have righteously won."

"What! Alvingham," said Saville, "do not mock me — do not sport with me — or, by the sacred name of——'

"Stop, Saville!" exclaimed the major; "Harriet, my beloved, look up. Saville, my friend — I cannot speak — Saville, I say ——"

"Go to her, Charles," said Alvingham.

"For what!" exclaimed Saville.

"My sister herself must speak for me," exclaimed Brown. "Take her! take her, Saville! — she is yours for ever."

"Sister!" exclaimed Mrs. Alvingham.

Harriet, overwhelmed with tears, sank from the support of her brother into the arms of Charles, who, yet unconscious of the meaning of all he saw and heard, clasped her, beloved and faithful as she was, close to his beating heart.

"*Your* sister, major?" said Mrs. Alvingham, "and not your wife?"

"Here," said the major, a little recovering from the excitement into which he had been betrayed; "this, my dear Mrs. Alvingham, is *my* treasure, a widow too, and the friend of my sister, who is so much better disposed of."

It is quite clear that if a stranger were accidentally to drop into a party similarly situated, he would feel himself in an extremely embarrassing and disagreeable situation. The reader is that stranger, at present; he shall be taken from it as soon as possible.

Major Brown, who was the son of Mrs. Franklin by her first husband, had seriously offended his mother previous to his departure for India. His name was an interdicted word in the family. Saville was, therefore, in perfect ignorance even of his existence. On his return to Europe he found his favourite half-sister a widow. To him she confided the real state of her heart, as regarded Saville; but, apprehensive that he might have failed in his truth, during the period which she had assigned for his probation, she commissioned her brother, if possible, to ascertain his precise position and pursuits when he returned to England.

By accident he speedily discovered him, became convinced of his worth and fidelity, and, having himself been attracted by the charms of his sister's intimate friend, resolved to make a double marriage the result of the two attachments. Unconscious, of course, that Saville had possessed himself of what he believed to be the secret of his intended marriage with Harriet, he saw nothing in the generous deception which he eventually put into execution, but a good-humoured surprise which was to unite all parties. For Harriet's agitation at the *denouement* he could readily account; but not so easily for the tone and manner which Saville had thought proper to assume. This was a mystery which could not be solved now — as it eventually turned out, all parties were made happy; and, at the present moment, while Colonel and Mrs. O'Lollocky are living at Dieppe, in an agreeable retirement, Major and Mrs. Brown may be found domesticated at their pretty cottage at Harlingham, and Mr. and Mrs. Saville happily established at their beautiful villa in Buckinghamshire.

THE MARQUESS.

THE MARQUESS.

CHAPTER I

"THIS comes of walking upon the earth," said a Spanish Hidalgo, when he tumbled down and broke his nose.

"I never shall go to those races again," said the Marquess of Snowdon to his daughter, Lady Hester Plinlimmon; "the people push forward and break in — no proper means are taken to secure one against the mob — the arrangement is bad — they choose the worst possible men for stewards; — who is Mr. Simmons, of Raggleby, or Major Stubbs, of Walford? I never heard any thing so absurd in my life. I conclude, Hester, you have no intention of going to their ball?"

"Why, papa," said Lady Hester, "I *did* promise ——"

"Promise — whom? — Mrs. Simmons or Miss Stubbs?" asked his lordship. "Of course, if you have promised, Hester, you must go: I have no desire that any of my family should break a promise; but *I* did not promise, so you must send over to your aunt to be your *chaperon*."

"Indeed, papa, said Lady Hester, "I have not the slightest wish to go. I thought you would go as a matter of course, and therefore promised to go too."

"You should never consider any part of my conduct, Hester, as a matter of course," said his lordship; "I regulate myself according to circumstances. If I had found the society and arrangements on the course this morning either suitable or agreeable, I should have made a point of going to the ball. I saw no evidence of any thing like consideration for me on the part of the people concerned, therefore I shall not go."

"Nor I either," said Lady Hester. "I can easily excuse myself — a cold ——"

"You must do no such thing, Hester," said Lord

Snowdon; "the Plinlimmons never have colds — how should they get colds! No, if you really have no personal desire to go, say that I am not disposed to go, and you cannot go without me."

"Any thing you please, papa," said Lady Hester. "And the play, sir, which you were to patronise ——"

"Psha! — more absurdity — did you promise *that* for me too?"

"Not exactly," said Lady Hester; "but you always *have* ordered one play while the actors were here."

"I hate plays," said Lord Snowdon.

"I do believe, papa," said Lady Hester, advancing towards her father, and motioning as if she were going to pat his cheek, — a mark of kindness which he successfully evaded by elevating his head beyond the reach of her fair hand, — "I do believe your hatred of plays arises from your having been told of your great personal likeness to Mr. Buggins the actor."

"Hester," said Lord Snowdon, turning almost purple with rage, "if there be fools or impertinent persons in the world who give themselves the liberty of fancying such a resemblance, it is neither becoming your station as a lady, nor your character as a daughter, to listen to such absurdity, much less to permit me to hear it."

"My dear papa," said Lady Hester, "I was only joking."

"I never joke, Hester," said his lordship; "jokes with me are very serious things; more mischief has arisen from jokes than any thing in the world. If the poor devils of actors want the sanction of my name, some of the servants shall find them out, and give them permission to use it; but there is no reason, Hester, why you should compare me with one of their fraternity."

"Oh, my aunt says you *are* like Mr. Buggins," said the bold favourite of her father.

"Your aunt is extremely facetious, I dare say," said Lord Snowdon; "but, considering her advanced age, and the state of her eye-sight, her ladyship does not appear to me to be a very competent judge of likenesses; however, whether it be so or not, Hester, I desire I may hear no more of it."

From this brief dialogue the reader may perhaps discover that the Spanish Hidalgo, who broke his nose, and the noble marquess, who was particularly vain of *his*, very much resembled each other in character. There is no denying the fact: Hugo Plinlimmon, marquess of Snowdon, Earl of Malvern, and Baron Plinlimmon, was of opinion, that upon the face of the earth — which he seemed to despise as much as the Spaniard did — there was no living creature his peer or equal.

His person was fine, his air noble, his countenance handsome, and his manners dignified. He spoke little in society, because he held few men worthy of his attention. He mixed rarely with the world, for he found he could not exact the universal respect and adoration to which he believed himself fully entitled. Ambition mingled with his pride, and he had always some objects of aggrandisement in view — to those in sullen silence all his efforts were directed. In his family, his reign was absolute, and one of terror. His daughter, Lady Hester, was the favoured one; and she alone, of all that were about him, dared to trifle with him; even she met his stern rebuke at times; and although she felt conscious of her father's partiality, yet her independence never reached to the extent of entertaining a belief that any body in the known world was either so great, or so brave, so wise, or so learned, or so good, as the most noble Hugo, marquess of Snowdon, Earl of Malvern, and Baron Plinlimmon.

His lordship's family consisted of one son and one daughter; he had been several years a widower, and the education of Lady Hester had been conducted under the care of her aunt. Lord Malvern, his lordship's son, had gone through a regular course of Eton and Oxford, and was now absent on the continent, accompanied by a tutor of about his own age, and who had been chosen for his task by the noble marquess, because he appeared to him extremely well mannered, and that his grandmother had been a gentlewoman.

Upon this son all his hopes were fixed — in him all his anxiety centered. For his daughter, Lady Hester, he believed he had secured a suitable husband: her gentle cha-

racter, derived from a broken-hearted mother, seemed to offer no prospect of resistance to her father's wishes, or rather commands. And having thus far ordered his domestic affairs, the marquess anxiously looked forward to another important arrangement, with the precise nature of which the reader will in due time be made acquainted.

The establishments of Lord Snowdon in town and country were characterised by the solemn dignity which distinguished their noble master. The servants moved noiselessly about the various rooms with a soft step and a light tread, as if they feared to betray the ordinary symptoms of humanity,—the lofty windows were never opened to admit the vulgar air into apartments redolent with perfume, which burnt silently, and seemed to fill the space around with sullen vapour, — every one spoke in whispers. While the noble lord was present, the conversation consisted of little more than answers to his lordship's questions, and its spirit was that of perfect acquiescence in all his lordship's opinions.

Unhappy as those who surrounded this proud man might be, the proud man himself was more unhappy still. His life was one perpetual effort for effect: to be natural, with *him*, was to be vulgar. He regulated his actions neither by his passions nor his feelings, but by a calculation of what the results of his conduct might be; and, however much his lordship might be annoyed by a comparison with Mr. Buggins, of the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, in acting a part, his lordship was in no degree a less indefatigable labourer for public admiration and applause than the salaried mime.

It so happened that fate had all through his lordship's life opposed him in his dearest—in his only pursuit. His attempts at grandeur were somehow always marred; all his projects for self-exaltation were failures; and it generally happened with his lordship, as it did with the monkey in the fable, that when he jumped the highest he exposed himself the most.

In politics, Lord Snowdon was a Whig; the ministry, at the period of which we treat, was Tory. His lordship had two objects of ambition, upon which his hopes and

anxieties were constantly and immovably fixed; but whatever might be his own estimation of his talents and influence, they were, in fact, not sufficient to alarm the government into a compliance with his wishes, while his views of "things in general" were not such as to induce it to favour him by forwarding them.

In the outset it may not be amiss, as far as his lordship's public pretensions are concerned, to say, that a blue riband, and the governor-generalship of India, were the marks at which he aimed: the one he naturally sought, because he was proud; the other, with equal sincerity he desired, because he was poor.

It was just at the time when our brief narrative opens, that his lordship had hit upon the expedient of soliciting the honour of a visit at Lionsden from his Majesty; and when the acceptance of his lordship's invitation arrived, the delight of his lordship seemed to know no bounds. Not only was the honour itself in the highest degree agreeable to him, but he should have an opportunity of exhibiting to his sovereign the taste and magnificence with which his *ménage* was conducted; and he did flatter himself, that perhaps the two days' sojourn which were almost promised him during the royal progress, might so far prejudice his Majesty in his favour, as to induce him, at some distant period, to gratify his ambition upon one at least of the points nearest his heart.

That his son should be absent at such a time was one drawback to his happiness; yet still—it *was* such an object —such a triumph too over his Tory enemies. His lordship evidently hoping that an act of mere kindness and good nature on the part of a gracious and condescending monarch, would be construed by his opponents into a matter of vast public importance, and an indication of royal favour, which might serve them as a precedent or justification for any conciliatory measures which they might subsequently be induced to adopt, in order to secure his lordship's adhesion. Ridiculous expectation! — the king, God bless him! thought neither of adhesion nor opposition—neither of Whig nor Tory. When he accepted the invitation, he thought it pleasant to go—so did the queen; it lay in

their way. There was no good reason why they should not go, and so they agreed to honour Lord Snowdon with a visit.

Every hour, every minute, of Lord Snowdon's time was now occupied in preparations for the reception of the royal party. Gunter was forthwith called into council; Edgington was summoned in the tent and marquee department; the best artists were sent for to arrange brilliant displays of fireworks for the evenings; Weippert, Colinet, and the other procurable bands in London, were put in requisition to make "a concord of sweet sounds;" while in the sanctum of the marquess himself was proceeding the arrangement of special invitations, under the sanction of a confidential member of the royal household, who had been specially invited to Lionsden for the purpose.

Anxious as Lord Snowdon was to render this fête perfect, and elated as he was at the prospect before him, there did exist a feeling in his breast, connected with the royal visit, which was of even still higher personal interest to himself. Lady Hester noticed that her father's manner was much changed during the early days of his preparatory operations, and could not exactly account for what appeared to her a paradoxical appearance of humility, and softness, and kindness in his manner towards herself, which she did not believe—knowing every turn of his mind as she did—could naturally result from the circumstances in which he was just then placed. Her ladyship was destined soon to comprehend the meaning of this agreeable change.

"Hester, dear," said his lordship, sitting with his daughter *tête-à-tête* after dinner, "I think I have now made every arrangement for the reception. The whole south wing is appropriated to their majesties, and their immediate attendants. Nothing can suit better; the rooms are laid out exactly as they ought to be; and I flatter myself the thing will altogether be as well done as possible. With respect to visitors in the castle, I have desired our friend, who left us this morning, to do me the favour of taking the king's pleasure; and as to those who are to be feasted in the park, I have complete accommodation for two thousand."

"Oh, with *your* taste, my dear papa," said Lady Hester, "there can be no doubt of complete success in the effect."

"Hester," said his lordship, suddenly altering the tone of his voice to the pathetically paternal, "you speak of *my* taste; I have a few words to say to you, which you must do me the favour to hear patiently, and then give me an opinion upon them."

Lady Hester was a good deal startled at the manner in which her father addressed her, and certainly not less at the idea of his asking *her* opinion upon any subject, or of proposing to adopt any which she might venture to give.

"Hester, my love," continued the marquess, "in my progress through life, since the death of your excellent mother, the advancement and happiness of my children have been the main objects of my care and solicitude. Parental duty, as well as self-respect, has prompted me to make all sacrifices at all times for the benefit of yourself and your brother Alfred. To both of you I have looked as to the only objects of my affection and devotion. You will find that I have made such provision for him and for you, besides that which is naturally his own, as may prove to you hereafter the sincerity of my present explanation."

"My dear father," said Lady Hester, surprised and even alarmed at the tone and character of his conversation, which appeared so strangely introduced, and so curiously misplaced, "neither I, nor Alfred, I am sure, ever doubted your kindness and affection. Have I done any thing to induce you to think me remiss in duty, or deficient in gratitude?"

"No, Hester," said his lordship "I do not believe it possible in the course of nature, that children of mine should be obnoxious to such vices. There is in our family an inherent contempt of baseness. Filial ingratitude is the basest of crimes; and, therefore, Hester dear, I am quite satisfied that it cannot be nourished in the blood of the Plinlimmons. No: on the contrary I have every reason to be gratified and pleased with your conduct towards me. My motive for entering upon this conversation you will presently see."

Lady Hester, who now began to anticipate, dreaded the discussion which she believed would follow.

"You will recollect," continued the marquess, "the position in which you are now placed. I consider you, as indeed you consider yourself, the affianced wife of Lord Elmsdale, a nobleman whose family is unexceptionable, whose character is unimpeachable, and whose attachment to you is now a matter of notoriety to all the world. He has made proposals which you have finally accepted; and with the sincerest possible gratification I sit down, contented with having established you in a highly enviable position in society."

Lady Hester bowed. Upon this subject a reply would nave produced a domestic earthquake.

"Well then," continued Lord Snowdon, "you are now settled independently of *me;* and your brother, of whose judgment and principles I have the highest opinion, will, I am perfectly certain, in any alliance he may make, maintain his station in the world to my complete satisfaction. We are on the best terms. I have no fault to find with him; he thinks exactly as I do; feels with me upon all subjects; and I, on the other hand, am perfectly ready to meet his views in marriage by any temporary sacrifice which may conduce to his comfort and dignity."

Lady Hester bowed her head, which was all that her noble father expected her to do.

"Now comes the point of my observations, Hester," said his lordship. "I have recapitulated what *I* have done in my capacity of parent, for my children;—you are now to hear what I expect my children to do for *me*. You and your brother will shortly quit me. When you are both gone, my position will be materially changed. I mix little, as you know, with my neighbours in the country; my visiting circle in London is necessarily confined; for I cannot submit to an intercourse with persons for whom I feel no regard or respect; and the principal happiness I enjoy is in retirement from a world which now possesses for me little of interest or excitement. I feel it, therefore, necessary to establish resources within my own reach;—society that will amuse and gratify me, and a companion

who may take the place of a daughter whom I so dearly love, but to retain whom near me would be a most unworthy sacrifice of *her* interests to *my* enjoyments."

Again Lady Hester bowed.

"There is," continued Lord Snowdon, "a person coming here with her mother to meet the royal party—a friend of yours—upon whom, with that mother's sanction, I have fixed my choice. She is in every way qualified to assume the rank which I can bestow upon her. Her blood is noble; her family in the highest degree honourable; her mind pure and spotless; her person fair and beautiful."

In a moment all the truth flashed into Lady Hester's mind. Her father, who, during his solemn pronunciation of the last part of his address, had rivetted his eyes upon her countenance, saw that it had done so.

"Well, Hester," said his lordship, "can you guess who the lady is?"

"I—really," replied Lady Hester, "I ——"

"You know her, madam, as well as I do," said the marquess; "you are only acting, and you play your part ill, Hester. However, there can be no use in fencing with this matter. Miss Oldham is destined to become the future Marchioness of Snowdon."

Lady Hester's eyes filled with tears at the announcement, which, however, did not greatly surprise her; but she smiled through them, and unable to utter a word, rose from her seat, and throwing her arms round her father's neck, imprinted a filial kiss on his cheek.

A volume could not have said more.

"There, there, Hester, said his lordship, gently disentangling himself from her embrace; "sit down, dear, sit down."

Lady Hester did as she was commanded, after a repulse which could only have found a precedent in the conjugal reproof of the Duke of Somerset, whose "first wife was a Percy."

"I am to understand then," said his lordship, with a graciously solemn smile, "that my project has the sanction of Lady Hester Plinlimmon."

"Sanction! my dear father," said Lady Hester, "what wish can I have but for your happiness? Heaven grant it may be secured by this marriage!"

"The results, Lady Hester," said her father, "are not, in my opinion, sufficiently problematical to require so solemn an appeal; they must be left to futurity. From you, I expect merely that you should receive your visitor with kindness and friendliness. You have always esteemed and spoken highly of her before she was invested with the character in which she will now appear at Lionsden; continue to her in that character the same amity and affection of which you thought her worthy, before you had any idea of her assuming it."

"Is it, sir," said Lady Hester, "so entirely decided, that it is to be spoken of as a thing settled?"

"I should think, Hester," said the marquess, elevating his head, "that when I decided to make Miss Elizabeth Oldham, Marchioness of Snowdon, little else remained to conclude the affair."

"I merely asked, sir," said Lady Hester. "For myself, grateful as I am for all your kindnesses, and, above all, for the consideration which has so long delayed your second marriage, I have but one course to follow — to receive Elizabeth as an old friend for whom my esteem and affection are justified by your decision."

"Thank you, Hester," said Lord Snowdon; "I thought I knew how you would act; — I am not disappointed in my estimate of the feelings of a daughter of mine."

Of her ladyship's conduct the marquess certainly might have formed his opinion; but he little knew what were her feelings upon the occasion: they were of a nature not to be revealed; they were even of a character not to be encouraged. It was not because her father chose to marry again, that she trembled and wept; it was not because Miss Elizabeth Oldham was so considerably his junior in years, that she felt alarmed for his happiness; she —

> "Had not the smallest doubt or fear of her revolt,
> For she had eyes and chose him."

These were not the grounds and sources of her anguish and apprehensions; — but there *were* reasons why she believed

in her heart that the match would turn out ill, which she dare not as yet reveal to any human being. She admitted however, to herself, a possibility of her being much relieved in her mind after she had seen and spoken with her future mother-in-law, although the point to which she would most desire to bring their conversation was one on which upon no account in the world she ought to touch. One thing was certain — her duty was to obey her father; she had pledged herself to do it; and, as we shall see, she did it.

CHAPTER II.

No sooner had the welcome intelligence that their majesties were expected to visit Lionsden Castle circulated through the neighbouring town of Shuttlework, than a meeting of the corporation, presided over by the mayor, was held for the purpose of considering the propriety of presenting two addresses upon the occasion — one to the king, and another to the queen; the latter accompanied by a petition that her majesty would condescend to accept some specimens of the manufacture for which that ancient place had been so long famous: and after several speeches had been made, several resolutions were passed, and it was resolved that the mayor should forthwith put himself in communication with the Marquess of Snowdon, who, in addition to all his other claims upon their attention, was their recorder, with whom it was absolutely necessary the corporation should advise as to the time and place of presentation.

Accordingly the mayor despatched a letter to his lordship, requesting the honour of an interview, and begging his lordship to have the goodness to fix a time most convenient to himself for that purpose. To this letter the marquess was pleased to return one of his most gracious answers. He saw the propriety of the proposition, he anticipated the increased *eclât* which the presentation of the addresses in his house would confer upon the *fête*, and was so much pleased at the prospect before him, that he

appointed the mayor to call upon him at five o'clock the same afternoon, or, as his lordship expressed himself, "he hoped the mayor would do him the favour" of a visit at that hour. With such unlooked-for humility and condescension, how could the right worshipful the mayor of Shuttlework but be delighted? His lordship's suggestion was a command, and accordingly the worshipful the mayor made himself ready to fulfil the engagement.

Lord Snowdon, having quitted the castle for the purpose of personally superintending some of the multifarious arrangements in preparation, left a message for the mayor, begging him to wait, if it should happen that his lordship was not returned when the "right worshipful" should arrive. It so chanced, that the day, as it wore on, became foul and stormy; and the mayor, who rode to Lionsden, got completely drenched with rain on his way thither, and arrived at his destination while yet his noble host was detained by "stress of weather" at some distant part of his magnificent domain.

The marquess had left word that the mayor should be shown into his lordship's own room, (as it was called,) the ante-room to his bed-chamber, and of the same size with that apartment; which, while it was adopted for the sanctum, in which he passed all his mornings, and transacted all his business, served also for his dressing-room. Thither, according to his lord's direction, the groom of the chambers ushered the right worshipful; who, dripping wet as he was, did not appear at all displeased at seeing a fire burning in the room, although the season of the year was not yet very far advanced.

"My lord desired me to say, sir," said the servant, "that he expects you to dine here to-day."

"Dear me," said the mayor, "I don't know what I shall do, I am wet through, I ——"

"Why, sir," said the man, "my lord, you know, is very particular; he will expect you to dress for dinner."

"To be sure — yes;" said the mayor, somewhat puzzled.

"You can dress here, sir," said the man.

"Oh! then, that will do exceedingly well," replied the

mayor; "have the goodness to let my servant boy wait, till I send for him."

"Yes, sir," was the answer, and the groom of the chambers retired, unconscious of the mischief he had occasioned by one single, simple, and perfectly correct observation.

The mayor, left alone in the room, wet, dirty, and uncomfortable, had been told that the marquess would expect him to dress for dinner — the servant had also told him that he could dress "*here.*" His worship, taking this hint *au pied de la lettre*, felt convinced that all the stories of Lord Snowdon's excessive pride were calumnies, and instanced to himself, as a proof of his lordship's great consideration for his humbler visitors, the fact, that he himself had not only been told that he might dress "here," in this extremely comfortable room, but that with a delicacy of attention quite unparalleled, directions had been given to provide him with the means of "making himself comfortable," the moment he arrived.

"'Gad," thought the mayor, "here are the things put ready for me, all airing by the fire; I had better lose no time, but get off my wet clothes before my lord comes, and pack them away by the boy. Upon *my* word — talk of the aristocracy — I should like to see any man more mindful or attentive to his visitors, than this."

Saying which, having first bolted the door, the right worshipful began by divesting himself of his saturated garments, and seating himself by the fire, proceeded to habit himself in the different articles of dress which had been carefully disposed for the use of the marquess, by his trembling and attentive valet; a process which he so speedily performed, that long before a rattling on the lock announced an arrival, the right worshipful was cased in the noble marquess's shirt, stockings, waistcoat, and pantaloons, which, to the infinite delight of the right worshipful, fitted him, as he said, "like a glove."

The noise at the door hurried his operation of collecting his wet "things," which he had got rid of, and which he was in the act of tying up in a red silk pocket-handkerchief, superseded in its natural office by one of the marquess's

finest squares of cambric) when the marquess, finding admittance to his sanctum denied through its ordinary entrance, proceeded along the corridor into the bed-room, and thence into what the reader already knows was its antechamber, erst the region of his lordship's retirement, and now the scene of the right worshipful's activity.

"Good heavens!" said the marquess, starting back, "what does all this mean? — Mr. Mayor, I ——"

"Thank you, my lord," said the mayor, "I have availed myself of your lordship's good-nature — the things fit capitally — I'm sure I don't know how to thank your lordship enough, for *my* clothes were quite soaked, as you may see," pointing to the yet reeking bundle deposited upon one of the most delicately cushioned *fauteuils* in existence.

Lord Snowdon, proud as he was — disgusted as he was — and angry as he was — saw in a moment the nature of the mistake: how produced he did not stay to inquire; he felt that the mayor had not intentionally presumed, but that he had committed an unparalleled solecism in good manners, which might, as his lordship thought, have originated in the negligence of his own servants, or the perfect ignorance of the usages of society on the part of his visitor.

"I am glad," said his lordship, smiling at the absurdity of the event through the indignation which he struggled to conceal, "that you have made yourself so comfortable, Mr. Mayor;" saying which, his lordship rang the bell.

"Oh, it *is* a comfort, sir," replied the right worshipful, 'a great comfort, to get rid of wet things, 'specially when one is liable to rheumatiz. I'll just wash my hands, and then I shall be ready, my lord, for our talk."

Suiting the word to the action, the mayor, to the increased horror and dismay of his noble host, proceeded to pour water into a basin which no touch but that of the marquess had before profaned, and to go through the operation of washing his hands, indulging, towards its termination, his face with a general visitation of the towel, while the marquess stood looking on in a stupor of astonishment.

"Put some clothes for me to dress, sir," said the marquess to his valet, who entered the apartment.

"My lord — I ——" said the valet.

"Do as I tell you, sir," interrupted the marquess, "put some clothes for me to dress."

The expression of the valet's countenance, when he beheld the mayor habited in the costume of his lord, is indescribable; he saw that he must not speak, and accordingly turned from the room to get a new supply of drapery.

"Hallo! I say," said the mayor, "I wish you would just give this bundle to my boy, and tell him to bring up the gig — at what time shall I say, my lord?"

"Whenever you please, sir," said Lord Snowdon; "we are very early people here."

"Say ten — half past ten," said the mayor.

"And here, Stephens," said Lord Snowdon, "show the mayor into the library. I will come to you there, sir, when I have dressed."

"Oh! I see, my lord — I see," said Mr. Wiseman — such was the name of the right worshipful — "you are wet, too. Ha! Providence makes no distinctions, sir: a mayor or a marquess all one, eh — ay, you are right; at your time of life, wet boots are very dangerous."

The look which the marquess cast upon the unhappy man was withering — parching — killing; but it was lost upon its object. The mayor of Shuttlework was, in his own circle, as much of a divinity as the marquess at Lionsden; and the very circumstance of the condescension to which he attributed the convenience of the change of clothes, added to a conviction, already established in his mind, that the marquess knew whom he had to deal with, and that, although proud to the world at large, to the right worshipful the mayor of Shuttlework he wished to make himself particularly agreeable.

The explanation given by the valet to Lord Snowdon of the causes of the mishap which had occurred, convinced him that as it was his present object to conciliate the corporation, and gratify its head, his only course was the observation of perfect silence on the subject; and a determination not to excite that combination of regret, shame, and remorse in the mind of the right worshipful, which must utterly overwhelm him if he ever were made sensible

of the offence he had committed, and the outrage he had perpetrated.

The perfect ease and independence of manner which the mayor assumed, when, after a lengthened preparation at the toilette, the noble marquess joined him in the library, were infinitely more shocking to his lordship's feelings, than the effects of his ignorance. The true indication of a vulgar mind is presumption upon condescension; and Mr. Wiseman, who had been taught to dread the great inhabitant of Lionsden as something superhuman, was so completely overcome by the extraordinary civility of his noble host, that, as has been already hinted, he fancied himself an exception to the general rule, and determined to conduct himself accordingly.

The party at dinner consisted of Lady Hester, Miss Everingham, (an humble companion,) the marquess, and the mayor. A vacant chair at the table was to be occupied by Sir Henry Winscott; but as one of the rules — fixed as those of the Medes and Persians — or, as the mayor would have read it, maids and parsons — was, that dinner was served punctually at the hour named, it never was detained or delayed on account of the non-arrival of any of the invited guests, be their rank what it might. To this established custom of the house, founded rather upon common sense than pride, was attributable the agreeable circumstance, that nobody ever failed in punctuality, who knew the rigid adherence to a law once laid down in his family, which the noble marquess was in the habit of maintaining.

The dinner proceeded without one observation upon the absence of Sir Henry, and, indeed, without many observations of any kind.

"Lady Hester," said Mr. Wiseman, "may I have the pleasure of drinking wine with you?"

"Lady Hester does not drink wine, Mr. Mayor," said his lordship.

"I thought," said the mayor, "I saw her ladyship drinking some just now."

"With *me*, sir" said the marquess, "her ladyship sometimes does."

Lady Hester cast a commiserating look at her father in behalf of their guest.

"Well, then, my lord, what say *you* to a glass?" said Wiseman.

"Give Mr. Wiseman some wine," said Lord Snowdon to the butler.

In vain did the mayor hold his glass in his hand—in vain endeavour to catch the eye of his noble host; he waited for a minute or two, but finding no preparation making upon "the reciprocity system," he swallowed his own champagne, and continued eating.

"I was thinking, Mr. Mayor," said his lordship, who felt it necessary to keep his visitor in mind of the business to which he had been indebted for the honour of an invitation to Lionsden, "that the addresses should be presented by *you* at the head of the corporation."

"No, my lord, I believe not," said Wiseman; "your lordship will have to read them as our recorder. You know the recorder is the servant of the corporation; and as the proverb says, we are not the sort of people to keep a dog and bark ourselves."

"The servant of the corporation!" faltered the marquess.

"Exactly," said Wiseman, "our recorder is very much assimilated to the recorder of London; only, my lord, the London recorder is always a lawyer, and understands his business. Now, in *your* case, we are too proud to have you with us, without troubling you to do any work, except by deputy; but when an occasion of the present kind offers, it would be an indignity to the king and queen to suffer the addresses to be read by a deputy while the principal was present; and as for the mayor's reading them, that's totally out of the question, because, although as far as my own private feelings *goes*, I should not hesitate to do it, yet, you see, I must consider my office and its privileges, with a view to the rights of my successor."

"I see," said the marquess, "it is inconsistent with your dignity to condescend so far."

"Exactly so, my lord," said Wiseman. "Lady Hester, shall I give you some of this dish before me?"

"Hand those entrées round," said the marquess to the servants, in an agony at the officious civility of his civic superior.

"Still," said Lord Snowdon, "I think in my own house I ought not to read them — I think it would be inconvenient."

"Oh!" said Wiseman, "on account of your eye-sight, my lord? Ay, — now if you would but wear spectacles — the glass you use is of no service whatever, compared with a good pair of spectacles. My grandmother, my lord, who was a very fine woman of her age, was uncommon conceited about her looks, and we could not persuade her to put on regular spectacles till she was very old; but when she did, she never left 'em off again."

"I did not mean, sir," said Lord Snowdon, "that in that sense it would be inconvenient for me to read the addresses; I meant that it would be more convenient that the addresses should come to this house from the corporation, without my appearing to have any personal participation in them, which might with some people lower their character for spontaneous loyalty and dutiful attachment, which, in fact, so eminently distinguish them."

"Oh! I see what you mean, my lord," said Wiseman; I thought it was on account of your eyes; — well, I'll think about it; I'll consult my brethren, and we'll get your lordship's deputy to tip us a law opinion upon it for I should like to do the thing regular if it is to be done at all."

"*I* should like," thought the marquess; "poor wretch!"

By this time dinner was ended, and having been served *à la Russe*, the dessert remained, the only additions to which were two ices. At this moment Sir Harry Winscott was announced. Lord Snowdon waited till he had reached his eye, before he expressed the slightest conviction of his arrival: when he approached his chair, the marquess bowed; Sir Harry bowed to Lady Hester, and sat down."

"Which ice do you choose, Sir Harry," said the marquess, without moving a muscle of his countenance, "cream or water? — What are they, Hall?"

"Brown bread and grape, my lord," said the butler.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," said Sir Harry, (quite aware that as he had missed his time he had no chance for a dinner,) "I will wait a moment, if you please — ice, when one is hot, is not quite safe."

"I never *am* hot, Sir Harry," said Lord Snowdon.

"No, I dare say," said Sir Harry, "but when one is late."

"I never *am* late, sir," said the marquess. "Will you take some wine?"

"Presently," said Sir Harry; "not having eaten any thing, I——"

"I did not inquire, Sir Harry, what you had eaten," said the boiling magnifico.—Take the wafers to Sir Harry Winscott."

Wiseman, the mayor, saw that something was wrong. Lady Hester knew how to soften down the asperities, and in addressing the last arrival, expressed with her looks what even she, dear soul, would not have ventured to speak with her tongue. The mayor thought it delicate to change the subject.

"It's very wonderful, my lord," said the intrepid Wiseman, "how beautifully and correctly art now-a-days imitates nature."

"Yes," said, or rather bowed, the marquess.

"Wonderful improvements, sir," continued the right worshipful; "now, nothing upon this human earth can look more like natural hair than your lordship's. Nothing — only that I know what it is — would make any body believe that *that* wasn't your own hair."

"Put the wine round, Hall," said the marquess; "yes."

"And then, my lord," continued this dreadful person, "your way of combing it up a little, now and then — hey — that carries on the deception — doesn't it, my Lady Hester?"

The mayor, on making this appeal, turned to the fair daughter of the house, whose eyes were fixed upon him with an expression of wonderment and fear; wonderment as to how far he was inclined to proceed with his *facetiæ*,

and fear for the visitation which her father might inflict upon his sins against his personal sensitiveness; "the wig" being the very tenderest point upon which any living creature could impinge, not even Hester herself being permitted to know, or even believe, that it was not "all his own."

"I see, miss," said the mayor, addressing her ladyship, 'you have got your eyes upon me."

The marquess shuddered.

"You think these things of your pa's fit me uncommon well."

"Mr. Wiseman," said his lordship, writhing with agony, "Lady Hester has not had the advantage of an initiation into the arcana of my dressing-room. Help yourself, sir. Hester, dear, it is getting late."

"Hester dear" immediately gave Miss Everingham a look, and rose from her seat. They proceeded to the door, which the marquess himself opened. As they passed the right worshipful, he said, in an under tone, to her ladyship, "I hope I haven't driven you away by any observation of mine, miss?"

The marquess resumed his seat: to the mayor he continued his little attentions, but of Sir Harry he took no more notice than if he had been only the cushion of the chair upon which he sat.

"I remember, my lord," said Wiseman, "an old alderman of ours who traced a relationship to your lordship. It was when I was a boy——"

Here his lordship told the butler, who remained in the room to put round the wine, that he need not stay. His lordship was getting nervous as to matters of genealogy. The man went.

"When you were a boy, Mr. Mayor?" said the marquess.

"Yes, my Lord," said Wiseman, "he was an alderman, — it was in your lordship's father's time, — the corporation used to dine here *then* very often — he, he, he! — very often indeed, my lord."

"Yes, I have heard they did," said his lordship, with a look expressively indicative of his own determination that such horrors never should happen in *his* time.

"And this man," continued the mayor, "was a very good man; his name was Plinlimmon, like your lordship's, and he traced back to your house, and proved the connection quite clearly."

"Indeed!" said the marquess. "In what line was he?"

"In the bacon and butter line, at first, my lord," said the mayor; "but he afterwards got up in the world, and became a general merchant, and died at his villa, on the other side of Shuttlework."

Lord Snowdon would have given the world to explain to Sir Harry Winscott, (who was what his lordship considered "a very decent sort of baronet, in the neighbourhood,") how, and under what circumstances, his *vis-à-vis* got admittance to his table, but that the indignity which he felt had been cast upon him by the baronet's want of punctuality, was so much greater in his estimation, than those inflicted by the mayor's want of worldly knowledge, that he could not so far relax as to give his "worthy" friend the slightest information on the subject.

Sir Harry guessed it all. Like every body else within the sphere of Lionsden, he knew all about the royal visit, and saw in the strained courtesy and forced condescension of the noble host, an endurance which he could not have exerted, unless he had some one of his "great points" to carry — points upon which, be it recollected, so willed it fate, his lordship was invariably defeated.

The conversation slackened; for the mayor, notwithstanding his imperturbable self-satisfaction, felt his social powers very considerably weakened by the perfect silence of the baronet, for whom, in his own circle, every body had a very high respect. He had sense enough to argue with himself, even under the influence of the marquess's wine, that if such a person as Sir Harry Winscott felt so much awe for the great man as to be kept mute and silent, that *he* must be going at somewhat too fast a pace, by keeping the whole of the "talk" to himself; his temporary embarrassment was, however, utterly useless as an inducement to Sir Harry to come forward, who, between hunger and indignation at the treatment he had received, (but for which, as he knew the rule of the house, he ought

to have been prepared,) remained as dark and as gloomy as ever, sipping his wine gravely and mechanically, at the same time drawing himself up, and affecting, like the frog in the fable, to look as dignified as his magnificent host.

The marquess most devoutly wished both his guests at the bottom of the sea. and would not have endured their society ten minutes after his daughter's departure, but that he dreaded the exhibition which he was convinced the right worshipful would make if they went to the ladies, and anticipated the annoyance which his observations and remarks would inflict upon his daughter. He therefore sat on, touching upon the business of the addresses, in hopes either that his visitors would make a move, or that if they did not, Lady Hester would have retired before they should think proper to do so. At length, finding the mayor immoveable, his lordship rang the bell, and ordered coffee to be brought to them in the dinner-room. The servant who received the command, mentioned that Sir Harry Winscott's carriage was ready.

"Is my gig come?" said the mayor, turning round to the servant with a conciliatory smile.

"Yes, sir," said the man, "it has been here some time."

"Dear me!" said the mayor. "Is it a fine night?"

"I don't know, sir," said the man; "I will inquire."

"My poor old mare, my lord, has got a bit of a cold upon her," said the right worshipful — "and I should not like to get her wet. She has been a good un in her time, my lord; but as I was saying t'other day to Mrs. W., we none of us get better as we get older;—he, he! — I dare say you feel that, my lord?"

"It rains very hard, sir," said the servant, returning.

The mayor, within doors, now fully expected that his lordship would have made an offer to protect the mare without, from the inclemency of the weather, by desiring that she might be sent to the stables; but, no — she might have "melted, thawed, and resolved herself into a dew," for all his lordship cared; indeed, except as tending to interrupt and mar the preparations for the *fête-champetre*, the state of the weather was highly consolatory to him, as

being likely to act upon the humane feelings of the right worshipful chandler, and so induce him to beat a retreat—a consummation which the marquess most devoutly wished. His lordship was not wrong in his expectations: the mayor moved, and the marquess breathed again; but judge his lordship's horror and amazement, when Sir Harry, who—in the plenitude of his indignation at the treatment which he had met with, had hitherto remained either perfectly silent or merely assenting with a nod to any general proposition — said,

"Mr. Mayor, as the night is so bad, send away your open carriage, and I will set you down. You know I must go through Shuttlework in my way home; I shall be most happy——"

"Sir, you are very good," said Mr. Wiseman; "I shall be very, very much obliged to you. I'll send away my poor old Jenny; and I am sure, if she could speak, she would thank you too, Sir Harry."

Saying which, the right worshipful Mr. Wiseman without any further ceremony, laid violent hands on the cord which led to the marquess's chair, and pulling it *con amore*, rang the bell with a strength and violence fully proportioned to his gratitude and delight.

"What may your commands be with the servant, Mr. Mayor?" said the marquess, as Hall entered the room.

"Oh!" said his worship, "Mr. Hall, have the goodness to tell them to send away my buggy; and tell the boy to tell his missuss, as she need not set up for me.—And, Mr. Hall, sir, will you be kind enough, sir, to put my bundle—them things in the silk pocket-handkerchief—just in, under the seat. I am sorry to give you so much trouble——"

Hall, who glanced his eye towards his lord, thought it best for all their sakes to cut these directions as short as possible, and retreated to execute the mandate of the mayor, followed up to the door of the room by that right worshipful personage, who seemed fearful that if he once lost sight of Mr. Hall, his bundle would be lost to all eternity.

"A very civil man Mr. Hall, my lord," said the mayor.

"Do you take any more coffee, Sir Harry?" said the marquess.

"No more, I thank you," said the baronet.

"Don't you think, my lord, we had better go to the young ladies?" said Wiseman; "won't they think us long? I hope I sha'n't get blamed. Mrs. W. often says to me, that I must be very agreeable when the females are gone; for that she never can get me or my friends up to tea whenever I have a spread, or we go anywhere to dine out."

Of all the offences which plain simple man could commit against the marquess, the most heinous and the least pardonable, was that of instituting a comparison between his lordship and any thing that was his, and any other person or any thing that belonged to him. The idea of putting his parties, and his ladies, and his house, in competition with the saturnalia of the mayor, or the tea parties of his "females," as he called them, was absolute torture.

"I dare say," said the marquess, "Lady Hester has retired long before this: it is near twelve o'clock."

"Mercy on us!" said Mr. Wiseman, "I had not the slightest idea of that. Time flies, in pleasant company, my lord. This is uncommon good, my lord,"—continued his worship, smacking his lips as he imbibed some remarkably fine Curaçoa,—"uncommon good, indeed—something with orange peel in it. I don't know, my lord, if you drink much rum-shrub—it's something like that,—only this, being Frenchified in its name, is of course much better. Mrs. W makes excellent shrub, my lord: if you will allow me to send up a bottle or two, I shall be very glad."

Lord Snowdon bowed.

"I can send it up," said Wiseman, "when I send back the clothes I borrowed. They shall come up on Wednesday, my lord; Mrs. W. will get them washed and ironed, and all, by that time."

Sir Harry, who saw the workings of Lord Snowdon's countenance during this last speech, although he was himself in utter ignorance of the meaning of the mayor's thanks and promises, was certain that the force of nature could go very little farther, and that his noble host was

within one moment of an explosion. Not to be rude to the creature, who, with his myrmidons, was to add fresh importance to his reception of royalty, he struggled hard; besides, he saw and understood the source of all the ease and familiarity of his *entêté* guest; but his patience was nearly exhausted, his forbearance nearly expended.

Sir Harry, who was in fact extremely anxious to be freed from a scene, the fun of which was considerably diminished by the apprehension of results, suggested to Mr. Wiseman, that, although *his* horse was secured from the weather, his (Sir Harry's) horses were not, and that he was ready to obey his commands.

"What! was you a-waiting for me to start, Sir Harry?" said the mayor. "Dear me, I am very sorry; only think —I should have sot here another hour: I do like a little talk in the evening."

Hall here brought Lord Snowdon a tumbler of what was called at Lionsden, "King's Cup."

"Sir Harry," said his lordship, descending from his stilts, "will you drink some of this?"

"If you please," said the worthy baronet, who looked upon this as a sort of potable calumet at parting.

"Mr. Mayor," said his lordship, inquiringly, "will *you?*"

"If you please, my lord," said his worship; "never refuse a good offer. Dear me!" continued he, "this is very nice and cool—very nice, indeed."

"I am very partial to this beverage," said the marquess, addressing himself to Sir Harry.

"Oh, it's very good!" replied his worship: "I don't think I ever tasted any beverage before, my lord, — upon my word, it *is* very nice."

Lord Snowdon could not resist exchanging a look with Sir Harry, who with difficulty resisted a fit of laughter, into which he was near bursting.

"Come, Mr. Mayor," said Sir Harry, "I attend you."

"On Wednesday, then, my lord," said Wiseman, "I will bring up the drafts of the addresses, and the opinion of the deputy recorder."

"If you please."

"What time shall I come, my lord?" said Wiseman; "about the same time as I came to-day, or rather yesterday, since it is past twelve o'clock?"

"Oh!" said Lord Snowdon, — "no — I — beg you to come early — say, eleven o'clock in the forenoon."

"Good night, my lord," said Wiseman; "I say, my lord, I'll not forget the shirt and pantaloons, and things — good night."

His lordship exchanged adieus with his parting visiters; and, returning to his chair, threw himself back in it, and exclaimed, with the affrighted monarch,—

"'So—being gone, I am a man again."

CHAPTER III.

To Lady Hester, the resolution of her father — which, knowing him as she did, she had anticipated — of not bringing his guests to the drawing-room, was a great relief. It gave her an hour or two to consider and reflect upon the peculiarity of her own position, and upon circumstances connected with the intelligence which had been conveyed to her, the day before, by her father, touching his proposed marriage with Miss Oldham.

"I wonder," said Lady Hester to Miss Everingham, "whether my brother Alfred is aware of papa's intention of marrying again? I would give the world to know; and whether, if he knows so much of the affair, whether he knows for whom the honour of being my mother-in-law is destined. For myself I dare not write to him on such a subject, and am equally afraid of asking my father; but still it seems to me absolutely necessary that I should do something in the business."

"Why, my dear Lady Hester," said Miss Everingham, "you may rely upon it, that if the marquess has made up his mind to the marriage, nothing that either Lord Malvern or you could say, would have any effect in altering his determination."

"I have no wish to alter his determination," said Lady

Hester, "my father has always been a kind parent to me—to me his manner has always been affectionate—he is perfectly justified in taking any step which he may consider conducive to his happiness; and he may rest assured that if this event occurs, he will meet with no conduct on my part, in the slightest degree calculated to mar the brightness of his prospects. It will be, to be sure, strange enough; Elizabeth Oldham and myself have been so long intimate and confidential friends, that, at first, her new character will sit oddly upon her in my eyes but if it is decided, it is my duty to conform myself to circumstances: and I am quite certain in such cases, even if at first a child may feel some natural repugnance to a foreign influence. it is wisest as well as most proper to smooth all difficulties, and seem satisfied even if one is not quite happy."

"With these feelings, Lady Hester," said Miss Everingham, "which do you so much honour, why do you appear so anxious about your brother's concurrence in the arrangement?"

"Ah, Miss Everingham," said Lady Hester, "there *are* secrets in all families; if I were convinced that Miss Oldham of herself had willingly and readily consented to this marriage, all my anxiety upon that point would be set at rest. I cannot ascertain that fact — if even I might — until I receive her here; and then perhaps a confession, that it is on her part not a matter of choice, but one of compulsion on the part of her mother, who is a worldly, calculating woman — then, I say, I shall learn the truth too late. As far as my own opinion goes, knowing, as I think I do, all Elizabeth's tastes and feelings, I cannot — loving my father affectionately, and seeing all his merits, and aware of his power and place in society — I cannot yet believe that she would of herself form a connection, in which the striking difference of age between herself and her husband, forms an objection which however idle it may be, I always believed in *her* mind to have been insurmountable."

"Oh! Lady Hester," said Miss Everingham, with an expression of countenance which to her companion needed no interpretation, "I think there is scarcely any young

lady in existence, who would be found likely to decline the offer of Lord Snowdon's hand."

"I am not discussing the advantages or evils of such marriages," said Lady Hester, "I merely speak of them because I know Elizabeth's opinions upon the subject *were* very decided; and I have a reason for wishing to know what her real feelings are now, far more important than the mere girlish desire of finding out whether she have changed her mind or not. It is not alone her own happiness that is at stake — even that, I would do much to secure — but the happiness of another, dearer to me than anybody on earth except my father."

"How do you mean, my dear Lady Hester?" asked Miss Everingham.

"For Heaven's sake, Anne, never mention a syllable of this," said Lady Hester; "it is a subject full of difficulty and delicacy. All last night I lay awake considering how I could best conduct myself in it. Elizabeth has been a great deal with us: I like her, I might almost say, love her. Alfred, my brother, was constantly here too, and I know — now promise me, Miss Everingham, not to whisper a word of this — Alfred is seriously attached to her. My father's manner, and, as far as Alfred is concerned, his temper, are such, that Alfred never dared to hint such a thing, nor in his presence ever pay her the slightest attention. If Alfred's love were not requited, I have no desire that Elizabeth should not become my mother-in-law. She will not be the first woman who has so served a lover; and I hope and trust that Alfred will have sufficient sense and spirit to regard such a termination to his attachment, rather as an escape than a grievance. But I do yet believe in my heart that Elizabeth is equally attached to *him*. She was, Anne — she told me so — her whole delight was to talk of him to me, to praise his character, his manners, his person, all, with a warmth and earnestness which I then knew to be sincere. I do not believe that she, in whom I found by experience so much to admire, and even imitate, can have so far changed in mind and qualities within a few months, and since I last saw her, as not only to have abandoned, without compunction, the

being she then owned she loved, in favour, not even of an ordinary rival, but of that being's father. It is impossible, because it is unnatural: a young woman of delicacy, of intellect, of feeling — and she is all these — could not act so."

"But," said Miss Everingham, who was much more deeply interested in the discussion than the amiable Lady Hester even suspected, "did Lord Malvern ever make known his sentiments to her?"

"No," said Lady Hester, "certainly not in any set fashion of words; but Elizabeth is much too clever, and much too intelligent, not to form a tolerably clear judgment of the feelings of one who took no pains to conceal his admiration, who sought all opportunities of enjoying her society, and who postponed to the latest possible period his departure for the continent, because he could not endure the thought of a separation from her."

"I should certainly endeavour," said Miss Everingham, "if I were you, to ascertain her real feelings, and then ——"

"Ah, what then?" said her ladyship; "when I have received her here, I have received the acknowledged future mistress of our house; it will be then too late, Anne, to discover the wretchedness which is in preparation. Suppose she owns her affection for Alfred, — tells me that she is forced into this match with my father, — what am I then to do? Am I to suffer it to proceed? How am I to avert it?"

"Why not get your brother home?" said Miss Everingham.

"I would — but then, suppose I were to set about the execution of such a design; suppose he came, and suppose, then, that I found my hopes and expectations of Elizabeth's firmness and constancy acted upon, as I supposed, only by compulsion, all ill-founded? See what mischief I should do. I should bring father and son in contact — that father being *my* father, and that son being *my* brother."

"Would it not be possible," said Miss Everingham "to write to Mr. Burford?"

"For what earthly purpose, my dear Anne?" interrupted Lady Hester; "why — why write to *him?*"

"Why, my dear Lady Hester," said Miss Everingham, "as your brother's tutor, and so nearly of his own age, rely upon it, he is perfectly in his confidence; he might know how far his happiness is implicated in Miss Oldham's constancy, and by what he knew of his feelings you might regulate your subsequent proceedings."

"Me!" said Lady Hester, looking deadly pale, and trembling like a leaf; "I, my dear Anne; I would not write to Mr. Burford for the whole world."

"Why, my dear," said Miss Everingham, — by the way, a Miss of six-and-thirty, — "you have nothing to do with Mr. Burford, except in his professional capacity; and I am quite sure with such an object in view as you have, there could be no sort of indelicacy in obtaining his assistance."

"No, no," said Lady Hester, "*that* must not be. Besides, my father has a very high opinion of Mr. Burford, and I would not for the world compromise him in any scheme I might undertake for the securing of Alfred's happiness."

"When does the marquess seem to think this marriage will take place?" said Miss Everingham.

"He has not told me, but" — said Lady Hester, colouring and hesitating — "I think, from what I understood, it will not be before ——"

"—— Your marriage with Lord Elmsdale?"

"Exactly," said Lady Hester.

"And when is that to be?" said Miss Everingham, somewhat archly.

"Oh! Anne, don't ask me; I really don't know; there is no time fixed. Good Heaven! what a sad thing it is, that the ways and prejudices of society are so frequently opposed to the wishes and inclinations of our hearts. My father's temper, softened as it always is to me, I am sure would not bear the serious contradiction which it would receive in my positive refusal to marry Lord Elmsdale; but I am bewildered when I think of it. I have no objection to Lord Elmsdale: he is amiable and good-

natured; but in my mind he possesses no qualities calculated to excite that warmth and enthusiasm of affection upon which I am weak enough to believe the best hopes of mutual happiness are founded. It is a connection which my father says is desirable: Lord Elmsdale appears to be of the same opinion; but I am sure, if I could look into his heart, his feelings towards *me* are nearly similar to those I entertain for *him*. He does not dislike me — he is well enough pleased when he is here, and has made up his mind that the alliance will answer; but there is no sympathy between us. And yet, Anne, I dare not hesitate; to refuse would be to incur the most dreadful of all inflictions — a father's curse."

"Well now, I think," said Miss Everingham, (whose opinion of men, and particularly marrying men, was generally favourable,) "Lord Elmsdale is very agreeable, unobjectionable in person or manner; and to a disengaged heart like yours, I ——"

"Yes, Anne," said Lady Hester, "I am perfectly aware of his being very good, and quite unexceptionable, but ——"

"Oh, I am not going into his vindication or eulogium," said Miss Everingham; "and as far as your brother is concerned, I certainly think your apprehensions are naturally and laudably excited; and if I were you, *I would* do something, much, as I think, depending upon the time at which the marriage of your father is intended to take place."

"Elizabeth is coming here on Tuesday," said Lady Hester, "and, I presume, will be presented to the queen as the intended Lady Snowdon; at least so I suspect from something papa said."

"Well, then, my dear Lady Hester," said Miss Everingham, "you will have sufficient opportunity during her stay to satisfy yourself of her views and feelings with respect to Lord Malvern."

"What a task!" said Lady Hester; "and how shall I act if I find myself mistaken in her, and discover that the proposed marriage with my father has been settled with her consent and concurrence?"

"You can do no more," said Miss Everingham.

"True; I must not argue *for* my brother against my father," said Lady Hester. "It is remarkable enough, that for the last five or six weeks I have not heard from her, although we have generally been regular correspondents: that looks, I think, ominous."

"No," said Miss Everingham, "her silence may be easily accounted for under either circumstance. If she has really given up your brother, and enters *con amore* into the present arrangement, knowing your devotion to him, and aware that you knew the progress of his attachment, and suspected her consciousness of it, she would not venture to confess her defection; and if, on the other hand, she is forced into the present match by her mother, she would be ashamed to admit the inducements under which she had submitted to renounce the son for the father. No: wait till she comes; discover from herself the real state of the case, and then, as far as my humble advice goes, dear Lady Hester, you may command me."

Here the conversation of the ladies upon this interesting topic was terminated by the arrival of the servants with coffee; but it had already produced a very powerful effect upon the mind of Miss Everingham, who, if not actuated by feelings so highly honourable and exemplary as those of Lady Hester, was considerably agitated by the certainty of the Marquess's marriage; it having, throughout her long career in the family, appeared to her to be just within the scope of probability, that if she waited patiently till the time should arrive when Lord Snowdon became, even in his own opinion, old, and desirous of that moderate and philosophical consolation which an elderly gentleman might prudently and respectably obtain, from an union with a lady of good family and connections, who had lost the bloom of youth, but upon whose once beautiful face, Cupid had left his footmarks, in the shape of wrinkles, she might, without interfering with the prospects of the younger branches, become the head of her noble cousin's establishment, of which she had for so many years been the constant ornament.

To *her*, therefore, the news of the Marquess's marriage

was important in the highest degree; and if Lady Hester had desired by any means to break it off altogether, she could not have hit upon a more efficient ally than her friend Miss Everingham. It was, however, not her wish to do so. We have seen whither her anxiety tended, and may yet see — if we have patience — in what manner it was rewarded.

It was curious enough that amongst the gay party expected upon the coming occasion, the intended husband of Lady Hester, and the intended wife of her father, should both be numbered. Much more curious will it prove, if it should turn out that the beloved of his son was also present in the character of his future mother-in-law; — these are the intricacies and interests which chequer even the brightest scenes of human life.

In the morning after this discussion between the ladies, the marquess was more than usually occupied in his arrangements. There seemed to be a constant interchange of messengers and despatches between Lionsden and the Marquess's private friend at Windsor. Nothing that could conduce to the ease and comfort of the royal party was left undone; and as the time approached for its arrival Lord Snowdon seemed to gain new life, and an activity and animation scarcely natural to his character.

On the Wednesday he completed his business with the corporation: he acceded to the proposition of reading the addresses to their majesties himself; and it was settled that the mayor, aldermen, and burgesses should be waiting the arrival of their majesties at the great entrance to Lionsden, while the marquess, with a party of the neighbouring nobility and gentry, mounted on horseback, should receive the cortége at the park gates; that they should escort the carriages to the door of the castle, where the corporation would form a lane across the hall through which their majesties would pass to the great drawing-room, in which two chairs of state were to be placed. That as soon as the king and queen had reached their chairs, the corporation should be presented by the recorder, who afterwards was to receive the addresses from the mayor, and read them to

their majesties, copies of both having been sent off to Windsor so soon as they were completed, in order that suitable answers might be prepared.

The county yeomanry, of which the noble marquess was colonel, were to form the escort and guard of honour, and a park of artillery, brought from London on purpose, were to fire a double salute, when the royal standard was hoisted upon the Knight's Tower, at the moment their majesties entered the castle.

After the presentation of the addresses, a cold collation was to be partaken of by all the municipal officers, and the festivities without the castle were to commence; pony phaetons were to be in readiness for the royal party to drive to different points where the marquees were pitched, and where they would, no doubt, condescend to gratify their loyal subjects by a sight of their august persons.

Nothing could be more exhilarating, nothing more delightful; yet Lady Hester smiled not; she seemed abstracted in the midst of the gaiety, and when, upon the eve of all this splendour, she found herself seated next Lord Elmsdale, her affianced lord, she found no consolation in his presence to compensate for the absence of others who had been expected. Lady Katharine Oldham and her daughter were prevented from joining the party by the illness of the former, and Lady Hester was doomed to exist — how much longer she knew not — in ignorance of the real state of her friend's feelings.

Lord Snowdon was evidently mortified at the absence of his intended bride. The circumstances under which she would have been declared the future mistress of Lionsden, were full of brilliancy and effect, and having the sanction of royalty to his choice, would have been extremely agreeable to his lordship.

"I am very much vexed at Lady Katharine's illness," said the marquess to his daughter; "these things always turn out so. Nothing could have been more agreeable or opportune than this gaiety: but, however, we must not complain; health must be attended to; fallible mortals, let their rank and pretensions be what they may, must submit to the decrees of Providence."

"How dear Alfred would have enjoyed these days of festivity!" said Lady Hester.

"I wish he were here," said Lord Snowdon; "there was no time to invite him; I have written to him within these three or four days."

"Have you mentioned Elizabeth's marriage to him, sir?" said Lady Hester, tremblingly, and almost dreading the answer.

"No, I have not," said the marquess, "and I will tell you why, Hester dear. I have determined, as a duty which I owe to you, and in the fulfilment of a promise which I have made to myself, not to marry until after *you* are married. No person, however much I may esteem and admire her, shall come into this house to supersede my child as its mistress. When Lord Elmsdale can finish his legal arrangements, and that ceremony is performed, I shall consider myself free and exonerated from my self-imposed obligation. There are difficulties which require some short time to obviate them, and therefore I delay the announcement of my intentions to Alfred until his arrival here to attend your marriage, which, as I have planned it, will be quite time enough; besides, I can talk the matter over better, I think, than write it: if he hears of it incidentally, there's no objection; but from *me* I would rather it should come to his knowledge in conversation."

Lady Hester became intensely anxious to know when it was probable her father might wish her union with Lord Elmsdale to take place; but she also felt that she could not ask the question without subjecting herself to an imputation of anxiety of a very different character from that which she really felt. Her father, however, who had a great insight into human nature—the more wonderful as he looked down upon the world from such a prodigious height—caught her meaning from her manner, and without distressing her for any explanation, continued,—

"As for Elmsdale's marriage, I should think it might take place, if you have no objection, Hester, early in the next month; by that time we shall get over the obstacles which exist merely in legal technicalities and dry points of form. There is an extremely good piece of advice which

the moralists of middling life give to their children, "to marry and settle." With us, the marrying is as easy as with them, but when we come to '*settle,*' the cases are widely different."

Lady Hester had now got a reprieve — and in that light she considered it — for three or four weeks; and she rejoiced in the information; for from Lord Elmsdale himself she heard nothing of the sort; he seemed to consider their union a settled thing, and that the delay which occurred was owing to the necessary proceedings of lawyers, and others concerned in the arrangements. But he neither expressed impatience at the procrastination of his happiness, nor indeed, as far as his manner went, did it appear that he anticipated any very considerable share of felicity even in the conclusion of the affair.

Lady Hester, on the other hand, yielded to her father's wish in accepting the offer which he had persuaded his noble friend to make. It was decided; the marquess had commanded her to tell him if her heart was pre-engaged; she denied that it was; she dare not tell the truth; but to her own conscience, in her self-communings, could she boldly and honestly avow that her affections were free? No: if ever woman was devoted to man, Lady Hester was heart and soul the captive of one, truly worthy of her, in mind, in character, in principle; in every point, save two — fortune, and, in another still more important to her noble father, blood. Who this fondly loved and secretly treasured object was, it would be useless here to mention; for, as we have just heard, the Lady Hester was to become Lady Elmsdale early in the following month.

The hurry and bustle of preparation for the royal visit seemed to increase as the day of its occurrence approached. The party destined to meet the illustrious guests began to assemble, and on the evening previous to the important day, Lord Snowdon sat himself down, perfectly satisfied that nothing had been left undone to give eclât to the affair. He retired to rest, only to dream of royalty, drums, trumpets, cannon, ribbons, stars, music, feasting, and fireworks.

Every servant and officer of the household had been

furnished with a paper of instructions special to himself, and with a programme of the general proceedings; and when the morning dawned, every one was alive and on the *qui vive* to execute the great design of their magnificent master

The first failure was a very serious one, but it was the fault of nobody. The morning was ushered in, not by a salvo of artillery, as had been proposed, but by one of the most violent storms of hail, rain, and wind that had occurred in the memory of man. Before eleven o'clock, all the flags which had been displayed were blown from their masts, and two thirds of the admirably constructed dinner-tents levelled with the ground, crushing in their fall crates of crockery, and mixing with the mud all the inciting condiments which were to have given zest to the abundant viands. The orchestra, erected for the Russian Horns, was blown into the sheet of water near which it was placed, and the barge in which the band of the county militia were harmoniously to have circumnavigated its surface, was cast high and dry upon the land; in short, such a scene of confusion was never before witnessed.

At a little after noon came the corporation, — not in state, or in procession, but as they could, by detachments: some in post-chaises, others in gigs, flies, and similar conveyances — the sword and mace having been cautiously forwarded in the carrier's covered cart, wrapped up in a blanket, which served to protect "the baubles" from the effects of the weather. A crowd of rain-defying urchins had clustered round the gates, by whom every new and well-wetted comer was greeted with a shout of laughter.

It was at these gates that the noble marquess proposed to meet the royal cortége; but as the storm showed no symptoms of abatement, instead of waiting its arrival on horseback, the horses of his lordship and of three or four inveterate toadies, who alone could be prevailed upon to face the tempest, were placed under cover, while his lordship and these faithful adherents were huddled into one of the lodges, a servant being placed on the look-out to give timely notice of the approach of their majesties.

Pain, Lord Snowdon could endure without flinching, —

sorrow, he could feel without weeping,—he could suffer losses without regret, and bear privations without murmuring,—but any thing like ridicule was death to him. Already mortified beyond measure by the badness of the weather and its consequences, the cheers of the dirty little boys by whom his hiding-place was surrounded struck upon his ear as discordantly as the yells of so many demons.

"What are those fellows shouting about?" said his lordship; "do they see the royal carriages?"

"Oh, no, my lord," said an unfortunate servant, "they are only making fun of the mayor and corporation as they come in."

"Making fun, sir," said his lordship; "what do you mean by fun? Have them removed instantly."

The idea of one of the most important component parts of the solemnity being already converted into fun, went to his lordship's heart; but when he heard the roars of merriment with which they received the orders of the individual who had been directed to disperse them, his lordship's agony lest the illustrious visitors should arrive just at the moment of the disturbance, superseded all his other feelings, and he speedily countermanded the orders which he too late discovered he could not carry into effect. After this, shout succeeded shout, as the dripping visitants made their appearance, till at length the concerted signal announced the approach of royalty. The horses were speedily brought to the door of the lodge. The marquess and his friends mounted, — a performance which required more strength than grace, on account of the power of the wind; and in a few minutes all was in readiness for the reception.

When his majesty's carriage reached the gates, a momentary pause was made amidst the genuine cheers of the people; and the marquess, seated on his favourite charger, and dressed in his yeomanry uniform, welcomed the royal visitor, who, however, came without the queen — in itself a sad blow to his lordship. His lordship took off his regimental chacho with an air and manner which had on a thousand different occasions attracted the admiration of all who had witnessed the graceful display, and acted as fugleman in the cheers which welcomed the sovereign. But,

now shall his misery be adequately described — how his position sufficiently well pourtrayed — when the truth shall be told! — In uncovering himself, the tight-fitting chacho parted from its noble master's head with such reluctance, that the wig — nature's shame and art's masterpiece — came with it, and in an instant was blown over the heads of the populace, till it caught in the bough of a tree, leaving the marquess as clean shorn as a dervise, exposed to the pitiless pelting of the weather, the shouts of the mob, and the irresistible mirth of majesty itself.

Never was man so distressed. There he was, with his bald head, mounted on a plunging horse, curvetting amongst the umbrellas of the populace, having totally lost his presence of mind, not choosing to put on his chacho before the king, and not daring to look round; the carriage proceeding at a foot pace amidst the motley throng. To complete all his miseries, just as they reached the great entrance, where, according to previous arrangement, the magnates of the corporation were assembled, an active boy, who had climbed the elm which had caught the missing peruke, ran up to his lordship's side holding the dishevelled article in his hand "high up in air," looking more like a bird's-nest than a Brutus, at the same moment crying out, with the voice of a Stentor, "Here's your wig, my lord; I got it down, my lord; hope you won't forget the poor boy, my lord."

The corporation stared and wondered — to what straits may magnificence be reduced! Unconscious of what he did, the noble lord, in an agony of despair, replaced the well made yet much damaged covering upon his head, having, in the confusion of the moment, put that part which was destined for the front upon the nape of his neck.

It was quite impossible to help laughing at the scene, even had the example not been set in the highest quarter; and this laugh it was that wrung him to the very soul. Having affected to smile at his own misfortunes, his lordship procedeed in attendance upon his illustrious visitor to the great drawing-room where the chairs of state had been according to arrangement placed, the absence of her

majesty having been accounted for by the badness of the weather, which had induced the queen to proceed direct to Windsor.

This disappointment having been generally announced to the company, the ceremonial of presenting the address began. The mayor delivered it to his lordship, who, positively refusing the aid of glasses, (although perfectly conscious of the difficulty of seeing without them,) commenced reading the dutiful and affectionate testimonial, standing at the right hand of the king, the mayor and corporation being in front, and the apartment filled with all the company forming the invited party, and by a great number of the most respectable inhabitants of Shuttlework, who, wet as they were, had been permitted to witness the interesting and magnificent ceremony.

The moment the fine sonorous voice of the noble marquess was heard, silence the most profound reigned amongst the assembled throng. His lordship read as follows: —

"May it please your majesty,

"We, the mayor, burgesses, and aldermen of the ancient and loyal town of Shuttlework, beg to be permitted to approach your royal presence, in order to offer our dutiful congratulations upon your majesty's arrival in our neighbourhood.

"Accustomed as we are to hear your majesty's praise on all hands and from all quarters, it cannot but afford us the highest gratification to be permitted thus personally to express our affectionate regard for your majesty's person, and our unbounded admiration of your majesty's character and qualities.

"In venturing thus to address your majesty, we have to request that your majesty will be graciously pleased to accept at our hands, as a testimonial of our sentiments, and as a proof of our anxiety to merit that patronage which your majesty is known so generously to afford to the artisans of the united kingdom, two specimens of the manufacture of our native town, consisting of a blue silk pelisse and a white lace veil; and to entreat that your majesty will be pleased to appear in them in public upon the first fitting occasion."

At the conclusion of this paragraph, a shout of laughter rent the splendid saloon ; the king himself first stared with astonishment, and then burst into an immoderate fit of mirth ; upon which the mayor and the corporate body, released from the apprehension of committing a solecism by indulging in their merriment, re-echoed the peal, leaving the marquess in a state of perfect stupefaction, unconscious, in his anxiety to puzzle out the writing, what were the words he had uttered, and completely unaware that, in the hurry and bustle of the moment, and the crowd, his unfortunate, but well-meaning friend Mr. Wiseman, had handed his lordsbip the address which had been intended for *her* majesty, instead of that which was to be read to the king !

Any attempt to restore gravity in the audience would have been vain, — to describe the marquess's indignation, equally so : rage kindled in his eye, and the look of compassionate contempt which he cast upon the crowd, who could see anything comical or absurd in a grand ceremonial, in which he himself was one of the principal performers, was worthy the pencil of a Wilkie. To add to all his miseries, and conclude the spectacle in the most appropriate possible manner, the band stationed in the anteroom, hearing the burst of noise within, concluded that the ceremony had terminated ; and, according to directions previously given, struck up one of the liveliest airs from Auber's Massaniello.

Too great a liberty has, perhaps, already been taken with the sovereign, in introducing his majesty's name into a fictitious narrative : a sense of humble, dutiful, and affectionate loyalty prevents the appearance here, of any detail of the conversation which passed between the king and the marquess during the rest of the day ; suffice it to say, that the impression made upon the minds of all the party was exactly the reverse of what his lordship had wished and anticipated. In consequence of the absence of the queen, a masque, which was to have been performed in her majesty's honour, remained of course unrepresented ; and for the same cause, his majesty, instead of remaining to sleep and pass part of the following day, took his de-

parture at a few minutes after ten, about a quarter of an hour before the display of some magnificent fireworks; a circumstance, the grief for which was in some degree compensated by the complete failure of the exhibition, caused by the fall of the heavy rain, and the consequent disappointment of all those to whom fireworks would have been a "sight." All that we may venture to repeat of what passed before his majesty's departure was of itself enough to kill the marquess: "God bless you, my dear Snowdon," said the king, stepping into his carriage; "we have had a delightful day — excellent fun: I shall never hear the name of Lionsden again without laughing." A dagger to Lord Snowdon's heart could scarcely have done him greater injury than the avowal of such an association in the royal mind.

Every thing, in fact, had gone wrong; nothing had occurred but disappointment and vexation. Lionsden was associated in the minds of the visitors as a castle of storms; the ceremonies performed in it had been made burlesques; the premature destruction of the provisions by wholesale, had caused a melancholy scarcity of eatables when the proper time for eating came; and the ill humour of the noble host, resulting from these failures, left a dark and gloomy impression upon the spirits of the assembled hundreds, relieved only by the merriment which his lordship had himself unwillingly caused by appearing literally bare-headed before his sovereign. Lord Snowdon retired to bed, harassed, fatigued, and mortified, relieved from absolute misery, only by the consolatory reflection, that his beloved Elizabeth Oldham had not witnessed an exhibition in which every thing had turned out so wonderfully ill.

CHAPTER IV.

"BETTER," says the proverb, "be at the end of a feast than at the beginning of an affray" it may be so; but nothing can be more wretched than the general appearance

of the site of a *fête,* the day after the fair: smoked and burnt out lamps, withered flowers, exploded cartridges, broken dishes, smashed tea-cups, and the scattered skeletons of wasted *bon bons,* are but sad memorials of what is past. At Lionsden, all the habitable part of the house had resumed its wonted appearance long before the ordinary time for breakfast; but at the extensive outposts of the park and domain, evidences palpable and painful yet remained, of the ravages which circumstances and the elements combined had committed.

A night more stormy without had not for many years raged; but it was a calm compared with the tempest of Lord Snowdon's mind. When he recalled to himself all the incidents of the day, — *the* day which was to have been marked not with a white, but a golden shell, in the calendar of his existence, and recollected all his hopes and expectations, and compared the anticipation with the reality, the imagination with the truth, he could scarcely bear the torture of the solitude from which his beloved Elizabeth was so shortly to relieve him. That the king should have come under such circumstances; that under such circumstances the queen should have staid away; and that having arranged all things, as he considered, best fitting to the state and ceremony of such an event, that his majesty should have left his house with an assurance that he never should think of it again without laughing — these were reflections *all* too dreadful for endurance.

The breakfast passed off heavily: some of the ladies did not appear — Lady Hester and Miss Everingham did — Lord Elmsdale was at Lady Hester's side; three or four other guests were scattered along the table; and the marquess himself, apparently unconscious of their presence, hastily finished the tasteless meal.

"Hester, dear," said his lordship, "come to me in my room when you have finished your breakfast, — I have something to say to you."

Lady Hester bowed "yes," and cast a look at her betrothed which seemed to say, "my father is going to talk to me about our marriage." Lord Elmsdale understood the expression of her countenance, and sighed deeply; not as

lovers sigh, but as a man would sigh who in his heart did not anticipate perfect happiness in that which a little close observation of the family politics had induced him to suspect was not altogether a marriage of inclination. Lady Hester speedily followed her father, anxious, as it were, to plunge into the misery for which she was prepared, and which, sad but true to say, was generally the result of a conversation with her noble parent.

Her ladyship gently rattled the handle of the door of the marquess's sanctum — no one in Lionsden being permitted to take the liberty of knocking at it — and received the permissive "come in," with a feeling which nobody unaccustomed to such scenes and circumstances can properly appreciate.

"Come hither, Hester," said the marquess; "you look pale and worried, child; I am not surprised: yesterday was too great an exertion, too great an excitement for you. Sit you down, dear. To be sure, nothing could be more mortifying than the whole affair. However, there is no kind of use in lamenting over what is past and irrecoverable; we had better devote our thoughts to arrangements for events which are yet to come."

Lady Hester seated herself opposite her father.

"Hester," said the marquess, "I have received a letter from town, which will make a considerable alteration in my projected movements. Ladies are not formed for politicians, — at least I hope no lady with whom I have any connection either is, or fancies herself so; but nevertheless, I think it my duty, as the communication which has been made to me will make a change in our general proceedings, to mention the circumstance to you, in order that you may be assured that public affairs, and nothing in any way relating to yourself personally, have operated to induce it. I intend going to London next week."

"Indeed, papa," said Lady Hester, "I am ready to do anything you wish, and require no explanation of your motives."

"I know that, dear child," said Lord Snowdon; "but it will also make an alteration in the ceremonial of your marriage, which I had intended to have celebrated here; it

will now be solemnised in town: and I have been thinking, that as Malvern must soon be apprised of the approaching change in my condition, it would be an excellent plan to invite him over to *your* wedding, and take that opportunity of announcing my proposed alliance with Miss Oldham."

"My brother, sir?" said Lady Hester, turning pale as death.

"Yes, — why not?" asked the marquess. "Have you any objection to your only and so much-loved brother's presence upon that occasion?"

"Oh! no, sir," said Lady Hester, "none: only I thought perhaps it would interfere with his continental tour, and ——"

"Dear child," replied Lord Snowdon, "you are a kind considerate girl; but if I calculate rightly, not more than three weeks would be required to bring them to London, and return them to the place whence they would have to start; and it struck me that Malvern, who is so extremely and so very justly attached to his tutor, Mr. Burford, would feel it a mark of attention on my part, and of consideration on yours, if he were to perform the ceremony. — As my chaplain, it would be well that he should. Several of the bishops have already behaved extremely civil about it, and have volunteered, but I think I ——"

What his lordship might have been pleased to think of the right reverend prelates, and their extraordinary civility, it is not for us at present to know; for upon looking at his daughter in the midst of this flight of magnificence, he saw she had fallen back in her chair senseless, and apparently lifeless.

"Hester, Hester, dear!" exclaimed his lordship, rising from his seat, "what is this! speak, dear child, speak!"

His lordship rang the bell; Lady Hester's maid was summoned, and with her, came rushing into the apartment Miss Everingham, nearly as pale as her unhappy young friend.

"Raise her carefully," said the marquess; "I cannot imagine what can have caused this sudden attack."

"Oh! my lord," said Miss Everingham, "it's nothing; she has fainted, that's all."

"Fainted, ma'am!" said the marquess, raising his head to the highest point of elevation, "the Plinlimmons are not in the habit of fainting."

"My lord," said the terrified dependent, "I don't know what else it can be."

"No, madam," said his lordship, no more do I. There — carefully now — carry Lady Hester to her own room, and bring me word in a quarter of an hour how she is."

Lord Snowdon was a good deal puzzled as to the cause of this scene. He considered over all the possible physical causes for such an effect, but he never glanced at any mental agitation as likely to have produced it. In Lady Hester's marriage with Lord Elmsdale, he saw nothing but a most agreeable termination to the single life of his daughter. She had rank, fortune, and a gentlemanly man at her command; and he could not of course attribute an excess of agitation, so violent as to produce a fainting fit — which, in spite of the extensive privileges of the Plinlimmons, it certainly was — to the suggestion that her brother should be present at the celebration of her marriage.

No: although beyond measure unwilling to admit of any physical infirmity, either in his own person, or those of his family, the marquess had resolved to call in the aid of the leading physician at Shuttlework, when he received intelligence that his daughter was much better, indeed nearly sufficiently recovered to return to him, if he desired it; this he would not hear of, but accompanied the messenger back to her boudoir, where he found her calm and composed, and almost herself again, under the care of her valuable friend and companion.

To the suggestion of medical advice, Lady Hester returned a distinct negative; she knew that medicine could not restore *her* to health or happiness, and was perfectly aware that neither Dr. Leech, the whig Galen, nor Dr. Wright, the tory Paracelsus of Shuttlework, could "minister to a mind diseased." This pleased, because it flattered, the marquess, who had a very strong idea of the natural immunities of the family of the Plinlimmons, in

spite of the well filled vaults under his pew at Lionsden, or the exquisitely chiselled vanities by which they were surrounded.

"What *was* the matter with you, dear Lady Hester?" said Miss Everingham, anxious beyond measure to obtain a proper and acceptable reason for the direful impropriety of allowing nature to have her way before the marquess; "was it heat, or cold, or fatigue?"

"No, no," said Lady Hester, "none of those, Anne: it was what I never may describe; it was what I never dare reflect upon. Conceive—think—imagine—Alfred's coming to England to witness my marriage with Lord Elmsdale, and Mr. Burford being specially sent for to perform the ceremony!"

"Nothing more natural," said Miss Everingham, settling two or three ringlets which had been dishevelled in the struggle of bearing Lady Hester to her room; "you love your brother, and therefore his being here will give you pleasure; your brother is warmly attached to Mr. Burford, and therefore if it will please him that Mr. Burford should marry you to Lord Elmsdale, you of course must be pleased at the whole arrangement."

"Oh! Anne, Anne," said Lady Hester, "would I were to be placed in my winding-sheet on the morning of that day, rather than in my bridal dress. What, I ask you—what is there in Lord Elmsdale to attach me to him? He is amiable and good, I believe; but goodness and amiability are not so rare, that for merely those I should for life bind myself to a man about whom I cannot feel interested? But, I will obey my father—he has fixed his heart upon this connexion—it shall be done—but, oh!—not with Alfred by, and not with Mr. Burford for the clergyman."

"Why not, dear?" said the excellent toady.

"Why?" said Lady Hester, "I *could* tell you why—Alfred—I—could not bear—but no matter, no matter—this is all wildness—all folly—*do* persuade my father not to have Alfred here upon that occasion."

"Me, Lady Hester?" said Miss Everingham; "I have no power here now; I once thought I had some little in-

fluence over the marquess, but since the avowed and declared dominion of Miss Oldham, I have no chance of persuading, and dare not even suggest."

"Why," said Lady Hester, "as your relative positions are so different, I really do not see how your influences could clash."

This was delicate ground.

"No, certainly," said Miss Everingham, "your father never made *me* an offer, but ——"

"Oh! no," said Lady Hester, a faint smile gleaming through her tears, "I am quite sure he did not."

"But why so sure?" said Anne — as the old thing was still called.

"Why, I don't know," replied her ladyship, "I am sure, as far as I am concerned, I would give worlds that he had, and that you had accepted it; all that I mean — in short, Anne, I don't know what I mean; only that I believe, really and truly, I shall go mad. What is to happen to me, what to become of me, I do not know."

"Oh!" said Miss Everingham, rising, and making a sort of formal curtesy, "What does the Countess of Elmsdale desire?"

"To *be* any thing on earth," replied Lady Hester, "rather than Countess of Elmsdale."

"Why, my dear child," said 'dear Anne,' "every thing seems to be at cross purposes in this house just now; what objection have you to Lord Elmsdale? he is of a suitable age, of desirable connexions, and extensive fortune; gentlemanly in his manner, and kind in his disposition."

"I grant all that," said Lady Hester, "but in a connexion like that which I am about to form with him, it seems to me that something more is necessary to secure mutual happiness, than the negative good qualities which you describe him to possess. His rank is adventitious — his fortune hereditary — his connexions are naturally good — education has polished his manners — and the easiness of his circumstances has left his mind unruffled — but where is the ardour, and warmth, and genuineness of feeling, to which a woman, full of enthusiastic admiration

of talent and genius, looks for a reciprocity of affection and devotion?"

"Oh! my dear love," said Miss Everingham, "you are the most unreasonable of your sex. What! you expect every thing should combine to secure your happiness. The admiration of genius and talent is highly creditable to your taste and feelings, but an appreciation of the value of place, pre-eminence, and twenty thousand a year, would be more likely to establish your character for judgment."

"Ah! my friend," said Lady Hester, "I am not so foolish as to disregard the advantages of wealth, and the absolute necessity of competence, to secure a family from disquietude and unhappiness; but I am wise enough to be assured, that gold without love is incapable of producing that sort of happiness which I consider essential in marriage. Look at my father — it is true he is not so rich as a vast many others of his own rank; but his possessions are extensive, his income great, and yet do they insure happiness? Is not his life one anxious struggle to be something more than he is, one continued effort to gain some new point, which, when achieved, would only be valued as raising him one step nearer the next object he might covet?"

"Ah, but then," said Miss Everingham, "your father is a very extraordinary man; he has a mind full of restless ambition: consider the height at which he is placed above the common herd."

"I do consider it," said Lady Hester, "I do feel it, and I must say it would be very difficult to forget it, being so often reminded of the circumstance by himself; it is to his sensitive pride that you will have to attribute the ruin of my hopes and happiness. I felt that Lord Elmsdale was so estimable, so amiable, and so unobjectionable, that I dare not refuse him without adducing to my father some reason which he could bear to hear. I had none — my heart was broken when I consented to the match; but could I bear to hear the malediction of a father, which I knew too certainly would follow the disclosure of the real state of my feelings?"

"So then, Lady Hester," said Miss Everingham, "you

confess, do you, that your disinclination to Lord Elmsdale arises not from his demerits, but because your heart is pre-engaged?"

"Oh! dearest friend," said Lady Hester, "as you value my happiness, my tranquillity of mind; as you would support me in the fulfilment of one duty, and strengthen me in the exercise of others, never, never whisper a word —even to me — of this confession. I will conquer every feeling which I have entertained for the being whose name I dare not whisper even to myself, except that of pure and disinterested friendship."

"You will *not*, Lady Hester," said Miss Everingham; "the struggle will kill you; the continued effort will wear down your health and spirits, and you will be a wretched woman through life. Hear me, my dear girl — I can have no interest in this affair beyond yours. I have suspected the state of your feelings for some time — indeed, ever since the fatal acceptance of Lord Elmsdale; since which event, the struggle of which I speak with dread has been going on. I ask no further confidence; indeed, I would rather know no more; but, as I have a perfect reliance upon your taste, and judgment, and feelings, I have no doubt that, although circumstances may exist which at present would inevitably prevent a result favourable to your happiness, the object of your choice is essentially worthy the prize he has obtained."

"Indeed, indeed," said Lady Hester, "it is I who am unworthy of his affections."

"With these feelings — with this conviction," said Miss Everingham, "risk every thing rather than marry Lord Elmsdale."

"But how is it to be avoided?" asked Lady Hester.

"You should never have consented," said Miss Everingham.

"Had I dared to tell my father the truth," replied Lady Hester, "I should not have hesitated for a moment; but the dread I have of his anger, and its consequences upon himself, as well as others, is such, that I sank at his feet, a martyr to my fears; and now it is too late to do any thing but lament."

"I hope not," said Miss Everingham. "The wedding-day, you say, is postponed?"

"And, oh! for what — for what!" sobbed Lady Hester.

"That your brother may be present, and that Mr. Burford may perform the marriage ceremony."

"Oh! Anne, Anne!" said Lady Hester, "I must die first! I cannot bear it! I am sure, quite sure, I should sink dead before the altar!"

"May I come in?" said a voice, which the ladies instantly recognised as that of the marquess. It struck to their hearts. Had he heard any part of the conversation in which they were engaged, — could he have accidentally listened? An affirmative answer to his lordship's question was given by Miss Everingham, and the dreaded sire stood beside his wretched daughter.

"Are you better now, my child?" said his lordship.

"Yes," said Lady Hester, "much better; I shall be quite well by and by."

"I have come to you," said the marquess, "to tell you my plans, if you can bear to hear them. I have been talking them over with Elmsdale, and we have agreed, that as I must visit town, and may be detained, it will be best for us all to go up on Thursday. I have written to Malvern, to beg him to come over; and as an inducement to Mr. Burford to perform his duty with a good grace and proper emphasis, I have announced to him the death of the incumbent of Silgrove, and his presentation to that living: the best in my gift, and which, I am sure, I could not better bestow than upon him."

"Your lordship's kindness will be appreciated, I am sure," said Miss Everingham.

"Why," said the marquess, "the living is five or six hundred a year, with a very comfortable parsonage-house and to a man in Burford's circumstances will afford a most satisfactory retreat, when Malvern shall have no longer need of his services: he will perhaps marry some respectable young woman in his own sphere, and so settle down contented. I have a very high regard for Burford, — he is a very respectable sort of person. My dear Hester"

continued the marquess, "you are not yet recovered. Do I worry you by talking — is it too much for you?"

"No, papa," said Lady Hester, scarcely able to speak; "pray go on."

"Well," said Lord Snowdon, "then on Thursday we'll start for London. Elmsdale will go up on Wednesday, and be ready to receive and welcome us;—but I must not have you ill, dear Hester."

"Oh, I shall be better soon!" said his daughter.

"I have had a long letter from Lady Katharine," said the marquess, "full of regrets at her unavoidable absence, and a pressing invitation to her house. Elizabeth desires her best love to you. I shall write by to-day's post, informing them of my change of plan; and I dare say they will also go to town: if so, we shall make a little circle of our own, in empty London, and congregate together, like a tribe of wandering Arabs in the middle of the desert. So then, Hester," added his lordship, with one of his most gracious inquiring smiles, "we may consider that arrangement settled?"

"If you please," said Lady Hester.

"And now, my dear Miss Everingham," said his lordship, "do your best to make the poor child well. The fatigue of yesterday has knocked us all up. Elmsdale is wandering about the house by himself, seemingly in search of a companion, Hester; take pity on him, for I have many letters to write; and the weather is so execrable, that we can have neither rides nor drives to-day."

"I will cure my patient as fast as I can," said Miss Everingham, affecting a gaiety which nobody knowing what she knew could really feel; and the marquess, having bestowed a paternal kiss upon the pale cheek of his child, quitted the room.

Things now appeared to the ladies to have arrived at a crisis. Lord Malvern was sent for: this of itself would have gratified his sister, inasmuch as it would enable her to ascertain the state of his feelings with regard to Miss Oldham, and enable him to satisfy himself as to the character of her consent to the approaching marriage of his father; but his arrival was so distinctly coupled with

the confirmation of her unhappiness for life, that she looked forward to what otherwise would have been a most desirable and delightful meeting, with dread and trembling; besides she felt, independently of the misery which his arrival would speedily afterwards entail upon her, the most serious apprehensions of the consequences likely to result from his being made acquainted, perhaps abruptly, with what Lady Hester could not but consider the defection of Miss Oldham, and the acutely painful circumstance of his father being his successful rival in her affections.

One thing, however, was pretty certain: Lady Hester, as Miss Everingham had suggested, would have plenty of opportunities of conversing with her future mother-in-law, previous to her brother's arrival; and as Lord Snowdon made a point of his daughter marrying before (as he himself had said) any stranger should become mistress of his house, she was morally certain that until *her* doom was finally sealed, the union of her parent with her friend Elizabeth would not take place.

Perhaps the reader may already anticipate the full extent of Lady Hester's wretchedness. It seemed as if every thing, except those accessories which wealth could purchase or rank command, had combined to entangle, perplex and thwart all Lord Snowdon's ambitious schemes. To those who envied, and those who hated his lordship, the small failures in his speculations were extremely amusing: they floated on the surface; deeper and lower down were the points and objects for which the greater energies of his mind were exerted; yet such were his vanity and superficiality, mixed with talents of a high order, that the failure of a *fête*, or the ridicule of losing his wig, would more seriously affect him than the overthrow of one of his most important projects; and a recommendation to wear spectacles, upon the authority of the mayor of Shuttlework's grandmother, more grievously offend him, than the infliction of what other men would consider a serious injury.

The consequences of all this sensitive delicacy, and its almost constant irritation, we have already witnessed in a few instances; and those who knew him best would have seen, in his air and manner during the whole of the morn-

ing succeeding the *fête*, the mortification of its failure rankling in his heart, while by his smile and courteousness he affected to display the excellence and evenness of his temper, and, by a pretended activity and interest in what were, in fact, matters of ten times more serious importance, to exhibit his entire forgetfulness of all the *contretemps* of the preceding day, which were, in truth, incessantly and grievously tormenting him.

Hence arose the real motive for his sudden departure from Lionsden. He could not endure the scene of his defeat; he could not bear even to pass through the apartment in which he had approached his majesty with a suggestion as to the justice and wisdom of his opening or proroguing parliament, dressed in a blue silk pelisse and a white lace veil,—he actually avoided the room through which, otherwise, he would naturally have passed to his daughter's boudoir, and sickened as he cast his eyes towards the hall in which his majesty had graciously assured his lordship that he never should think of his house again without laughing. Nay, to so childish and extraordinary a pitch did this morbid sensibility proceed in his character, that the only drawback in his mind to his immediate departure from his magnificent castle was presented in the fact that, in quitting it, he must necessarily pass the gates where his most ludicrous personal exhibition had been made in the presence of the admiring populace.

The more serious reason for his desire to visit the metropolis at a period when, except life-guardsmen, treasury clerks, doctors, and dustmen, nobody is seen in the streets, was founded upon a circumstance which appeared to him of some importance in his political career. It seemed, from certain occurrences of which he had been apprised, that a dissolution of parliament might shortly be expected. His influence at Shuttlework remained as powerful as ever; and, from some observations which had recently been made to him, it appeared that his desertion of his own political party would not go unrewarded by the existing ministry.

Lord Snowdon, from a very early period of his career in life, amidst a brilliant display of perfect independence, and

an unqualified avowal of the purest Whig principles, had, as we have already mentioned, manifested a particular desire to occupy one public station, and one in which alone he believed he might, in the highest safe degree, emulate the power and dignity of royalty. The point, as the reader knows, to which he looked, was the governor-generalship of India. In that high station, with millions of subjects making their salaams before his musnud, with armies at his beck, and princes in his train, Plinlimmon, Marquess of Snowdon, fancied be could be happy. His magnificent ideas might then be realised, and all his plans of splendour acted upon to their fullest extent.

For years he had waited and watched every turn of affairs, in order to put in his claim for this envied appointment the moment a change of government should enable his friends to evince their gratitude for his long and steady support; but all in vain. The Tory ministers seemed immovable; year after year passed away: one died, another retired, a third seceded; but no matter, the heads of the hydra-like party sprouted again, and the Marquess of Snowdon could only console himself by hope, which, "long deferred, maketh the heart sick."

Time, and the conversation to which we have slightly alluded, had produced a visible effect upon his lordship's political opinions; what, in his early youth, he had considered patriotism and virtue, began, in his riper years, to look very like chicanery and delusion. The spread of liberal opinions, as they are called, had rendered more obvious the real designs of those whom, in earlier life, he had mistaken for heroes and sages; and convinced that even the men who had previously upheld their anti-social doctrines, and maintained their revolutionary principles, were themselves aware that the fruits of their labours would, at a much less remote period than they had at one time anticipated, rise up and overwhelm those who had sown the seed, his lordship began seriously to reflect upon the folly of clinging to a party grown desperate by protracted disappointment, and which, if it attained to power, must either ruin the constitution, in redeeming the innumerable pledges it had given to the people while yet unfettered by

official responsibility, or sink into the merest faction of adventurers that ever made its way to office, by promises then to be broken as readily as they once were made.

These reflections, combining with the curious enough coincidence of the probable dissolution of parliament, and a positive vacancy in the much-coveted governor-generalship, led the Marquess of Snowdon to put himself in communication with a very great man, who at that moment held the reins of state; not, of course, with any ostensible political view, but merely because some circumstances had occurred in Lord Snowdon's county which he considered it right to submit to the minister, in the narration and discussion of which, however, his lordship thought it possible to let slip so much of his opinion upon "things in general," as might allow his noble friend justly to appreciate the true character of his opposition to the government. That he had much at his disposal which it would please any minister to secure, there could be no doubt, and when the premier received his lordship's first note, begging to know when he could see him upon the subject of the supposed — or, perhaps, real — discontents and conspiracies reported to exist in the county of which Lionsden was the chief ornament, the reply was not only courteous in the extreme, but contained an appointment to receive the marquess in Downing Street any day during the ensuing week.

It was a step to take. There is a fascination in the very air of that little *cul de sac*, — an hour's inhalation of its atmosphere affects some men with giddiness, others with blindness, and, very frequently, with the most oblivious forgetfulness. A residence in it for half a year will convert the most violent reformer into the most immovable vindicator of public abuses; change a republican into a satrap; set a philanthropist flogging soldiers; convert the reviler of courtly honours into a Knight of the Garter; change a public demagogue into an imposer of taxes, and metamorphose the yelling denouncer of a profligate government into the holder of numberless sinecures, and the dispenser of uncountable pluralities.

It was to this mysterious street Lord Snowdon proposed to pay a visit during the week after his arrival in town.

The candle had been lighted, and the moth was on the wing. Be it ours to watch its flights and flutterings pending the progress and development of the numerous plans and arrangements in which were involved the private interests and the public principle of the head of the ancient and noble house of Plinlimmon.

The establishment at Lionsden moved with the precision and punctuality of clock-work; Lord Elmsdale having remained till Wednesday, as it was proposed, quitted it for London on the afternoon of that day. The other guests had previously gone; and on Thursday, exactly as prearranged, the noble marquess, accompanied by Lady Hester, and (as the court newsman would say) attended by Miss Everingham, left the castle in a travelling carriage and four, and after calling at Mrs. Edgeworth's villa, (to go to which they left the park not by the gates at which his lordship's mishap had occurred,) proceeded to the metropolis, which they were to reach in the course of the following day.

CHAPTER V.

It is not to be expected but that during the last hours of their stay at Lionsden, Lady Hester and Miss Everingham, who had now become more than ever essential to her comfort, from having become the depository of a confidence as to the pre-engagement of her heart, which the unhappy girl had never before ventured to make, their conversation, when opportunity occurred, turned chiefly upon the complication of events which seemed to involve and entangle them.

"I really," said Miss Everingham, "am at a loss now what to advise. I am unable to see my way. I still maintain that marrying Lord Elmsdale appears to me to be worse than madness. Yet, as you say, how is it to be avoided? No risk of your father's displeasure, or of his finally terminating my acquaintance and connexion with you, would prevent my speaking to him upon the subject,

if I saw the remotest possibility of his being moved by my entreaties. If we had an alternative to propose to him, it might be done, for he is devotedly fond of you; but we have not. The very name of the object of your affection would, I really believe, drive him mad."

"I sometimes think," said Lady Hester, "that when Alfred comes I might interest *him;* he has influence over my father, and ——"

"Depend upon it," said Miss Everingham, "the influence of Lord Malvern over his father will have infinitely less effect than your father's affection for you. I should — and I will undertake it if you like — I should think the must probable chance of succeeding would be an appeal to Lord Elmsdale himself. This is no time for compliments, no season for flattery, and I am sure you will not be vexed when I pronounce, upon all the knowledge of such affairs which experience has afforded me, that he is no more in love with *you* than I am with *him:* he has been awed into the connexion by the marquess, and, naturally delighted with your society, and charmed with your accomplishments, will in time be inspired with an affection for you of a pure and lasting character; but he did not begin with being in love."

"I rejoice at that, Anne," said Lady Hester; "and if I thought, without hurting his feelings, or wounding his pride or delicacy, you might suggest to him the gloomy prospect which must lie before two people united for life under such circumstances, I would intreat and urge you to such a conversation. And yet — what could he say in explanation to my father? He would insist upon the fulfilment of his engagement; and if Lord Elmsdale referred him to me to account for his apparently strange conduct, we should be exactly in the same position as if we began with my father in the first instance."

"Suppose we resolve to wait Lord Malvern's arrival?" said Miss Everingham.

"I would happily do that," said Lady Hester, "but recollect he does not come alone. The ceremony of our wedding only waits his arrival; and who will be with him? — the man who is to seal my fate — to unite me to Lord

Elmsdale. One day, perhaps, will not elapse between Alfred's coming and the wedding. There will be no time — no hope — no chance for me, if it be left to *that*, — and yet it must be."

"Unhappy girl," said Miss Everingham, "all your misfortunes are attributable to the candour of your character, and the singleness of your mind. You saw, admired, esteemed, and loved, and permitted the merits of your suitor to obtain possession of your heart, without waiting to consider how he could support his claim to the preference you so ingenuously admitted."

The real fact seems to be that Lord Snowdon had so played his cards that nothing could result from his machinations but misery and unhappiness to every body concerned or connected with him. To himself this was of little importance: accustomed by his mere presence to awe all his family and dependents into silence and submission, he was in the habit of considering them as beings scarcely one degree intellectually removed from his dogs or his horses. Lady Hester he thought he loved; and he certainly permitted her to express opinions and make suggestions. That he neither attended to the one, nor adopted the other, is not at all derogatory to her ladyship's mental qualifications. The mere permission to speak in his presence was a prodigious condescension; and therefore, having established in his own mind that the whole tribe of which he was the chief, the entire clan of which he was the head, were all — although infinitely superior to every body else — lamentably inferior to himself, he undertook their special care and safety; and provided for them to the right and to the left, as seemed meet and fitting to *him*, without either caring for their wishes or consulting their inclinations.

The ray of hope which alone beamed sufficiently bright through the gloom to keep Lady Hester alive, glimmered in another quarter altogether. Knowing her own heart, she had still faith in the constancy of her *friend*, Elizabeth Oldham, to what she knew was the early, the earliest attachment of her life. To disturb her father's prospect of happiness was the last of her objects; but to secure that

of her brother was the first. How the marquess had succeeded in obliterating the recollection of his son from Elizabeth's mind, and how he had contrived to establish himself, lord paramount in his place, she could not exactly comprehend. She could perfectly understand the anxiety of Lady Katharine Oldham to make her daughter a marchioness — she was just the person to do it; but the absurdity of the present case was, that Elizabeth might have married the man of her choice — the man of suitable age, and of congenial character and disposition — and be — not only *a* marchioness — but the very same marchioness — the marquess, to be sure, being different, but the difference being so marvellously in her favour.

In Elizabeth, at all events, Lady Hester looked forward to a powerful ally, and almost counted the minutes till they were to meet; from *her* she would discover the principle upon which the whole affair had been arranged, and if, as she hoped and expected, she found *in her* a fellow-sufferer, she did not think it impossible but Alfred's arrival might make such a sensation as should *bouleverser* the whole of that affair, which in its wreck might probably involve hers and Lord Elmsdale's; but this was all hope, and fancy, and she might find Elizabeth changed, and now as devoted to the father as she had, six months before, appeared to have been to the son.

Lady Hester was perfectly correct in her calculation of Lady Katharine Oldham's intentions and wishes; but still it required either a deeper insight into human nature, or some new mode of looking at it, to discover how the daughter had been brought so readily to comply with the inclinations of her mother.

Of Lord Elmsdale, the reader as yet knows as little as Lady Hester feared she knew of Miss Oldham. Nor would he become very much better acquainted with his lordship, if he were constantly associated with him for twelve months. He was, as Lady Hester has already acknowledged, extremely amiable, very good, very gentlemanly, very quiet, and very unsatisfactory. Unlike the ordinary run of human beings, he agreed with every body, upon all occasions, and under all circumstances. He perfectly coincided with his

intended father-in-law in the dignity and propriety of celebrating his nuptials at Lionsden; the next day he with equal readiness supported his lordship's proposition that the marriage should take place in London. On Tuesday he agreed with Miss Everingham, that yellow was the best colour for his carriages; and on Wednesday, at the suggestion of the marquess, ordered them to be painted dark green. In the course of the last week he considered it essential, because Lord Snowdon did, that they should be married by a bishop; in the beginning of the present one, he perfectly coincided in his lordship's opinion, that Mr. Burford, as his Lordship's domestic chaplain, would be, of all others, the person to officiate; the marquess having been pleased to administer his large dose of sugar-plums to the said chaplain, in order to secure his interest with Lord Malvern (over whom he knew he had great influence) to reconcile that young nobleman to the second marriage, of which projected affair his Lordship had not yet been apprized.

In manner, Lord Elmsdale was so calm and quiet, that even when he took the trouble to express his assent to whatever was going on, it was extremely difficult to catch his meaning; his placidity was imperturbable; and his unbending stiffness of manner formed a curious contrast to the extraordinary pliability of his mind: he looked as if he had been fed upon dry toast all his life, or just as if he had been iced when he came to his full growth. Nothing appeared to ruffle his temper; nothing to excite his feelings. His noble father-in-law, to those with whom he condescended to be familiar, always called him his gentle automaton, and it certainly seemed that his lordship, very early in the acquaintance, had acquired the secret of pulling his wires and directing his movements.

When Lord Malvern received his father's announcement of the approaching marriage of Lady Hester to this piece of negative excellence, he was any thing but pleased. He knew but little of Lord Elmsdale; and however amiable his character might be, however unencumbered his fortune, and however unexceptionable his family, he felt as-

sured that he was not the man calculated to make his sister happy.

"Who," said Lord Malvern to Wr. Burford, "could 'have moved this dish of skimmed milk to so honourable an action,' as marrying my sister? — it must be all my father's management. What am I to do about it, Charles?" —so his lordship was wont to call his reverend tutor — "it seems a settled affair, and I suppose Hester likes it, or she would not have agreed to it."

"Heaven knows!" said Burford. "You have but one course to pursue. I — I — have no choice left; indeed, I am not called upon for a decision. Your father has loaded me with favours. In addition to other marks of kindness, he announces to me my presentation to the living of Silgrove, close by Lionsden, where he hopes I may eventually settle, and continue in after life that friendship to his son, from which he is convinced he has already derived so much benefit."

"Indeed, I quite agree with Lord Snowdon there," said Lord Malvern, "and I sincerely rejoice that he has given you such a substantial proof of his gratitude. He has only anticipated me, Charles; and I suspect — it seems undutiful — that his lordship did not particularly regret the opportunity of administering a little of his patronage just at the moment when he thought your counsel as to my conduct on the occasion of my sister's marriage might be serviceable to the cause."

"He has assigned me a duty, Malvern," said Mr. Burford, "which, I confess, is an arduous one — one I would give the universe, if I possessed it, not to perform: he desires that I should perform the marriage ceremony."

"Well!" said Lord Malvern. "What's the matter, Burford, are you ill?"

"No — oh, no!" stammered the reverend tutor, "not I — why should you think I am ill?"

"For the same reason that I thought you well two minutes since," said Lord Malvern; "because you look ill."

"No," replied Burford, "I am not ill; I dare say I look flurried and agitated; I confess I did not expect to

have the task of marrying Lady Hester to the earl assigned to me."

"Why not?" said his companion; "nothing seems more natural — his domestic chaplain — what can be more correct? And then, Charles, perhaps Lord Elmsdale may 'thaw and resolve himself' into the splendid feat of presenting you with a magnificent snuff-box."

"I — I — doubt whether I have sufficient nerve to comply with your father's request," said the tutor.

"Obey his command, his lordship would read it, Charles," said Lord Malvern.

"If my refusal," said Burford, "is to be considered disobedience, I had better decline the preferment his lordship here announces, and resign you back into his hands, at least not the worse for my tutelage."

"Why, what on earth," said Lord Malvern, "is there in marrying two people? — Burying a person who has been dear to one ——"

"—— Is not so dreadful a task as marrying a person, about whom one is deeply interested, to another — if — the prospect of her future happiness is not quite clear and bright."

"Oh!" said Lord Malvern, "my dear fellow, don't fret yourself about Hester's happiness: I know her; and rely upon it, afraid as we all are of our noble father, she would not have consented to marry this man, if she did not love him."

"There is an awful feeling," said Burford, "which you cannot perhaps entirely appreciate, in linking for life two hearts which never can, by nature, sympathise. To me, the service of matrimony has more of solemnity in it than that of burial; the responsibility incurred by those who pledge themselves, in the presence of their Maker, to the fulfilment of duties, and the performance of obligations, against which the fallibility of our nature, and the perverseness of our passions, may afterwards rise in conflict and opposition through a lengthened life, is tremendously serious. Remember what the contracting parties swear to. Suppose, Malvern, that either of these kneel before me with a mind pre-occupied by thoughts of others, and take that

solemn oath which it will be my duty to administer, with a mental reservation, arising not from a premeditated design to its infraction, but from the recollection of other days and other circumstances, which had destroyed the integrity of the pledge by anticipation ——"

"I grant," said Lord Malvern, "that the ceremony is important and imposing in the highest degree; but I cannot admit the possibility of any person's kneeling before you, and binding him or herself to the other contracting party, while entertaining a thought of other days — or, rather of another person. As for Hester, I am sure you are safe — she was heart-whole when we left her. Indeed, I really believe that if any body ever wounded her, in that generally vulnerable part, it was yourself, my most reverend minister."

Burford fixed his eyes on the young lord for an instant.

"Well," said he, "all I know is, Malvern, that I cannot — at least so I feel at this moment — and will not perform the ceremony."

"Send no negative," said Lord Malvern, "but go with me, for go I must. Fight off the wedding, if you please: be ill — make any excuse — but do not irritate my father by a plump denial, and, least of all, by refusing his living: you will make him an enemy for life, and I shall be deprived of the advantages and *agrémens* of your society, from which I have, my reverend friend, already received so much essential benefit."

"I assure you, Lord Malvern," said Burford, "although I hate making professions, that nothing would distress me more than the occurrence of any of the results you anticipate by my refusal to officiate; but I have that feeling about it, and that apprehension of unhappy consequences likely to arise from the union of your sister with Lord Elmsdale, that I would die rather than be instrumental to the connexion."

"Ah, well!" said Lord Malvern, "you shall have your way. Now, I tell you what: will you be satisfied by this arrangement? — we will start for England to-morrow — reach it as fast as we can. When we arrive, say nothing to the marquess about your feelings or your resolutions,

and he will take it for granted that every thing is going smoothly, and that you are ready to perform your office. In the mean time see Hester: she has the highest possible opinion of you; and although I must confess she never says any thing about you in her letters to me, when any thing occurs to draw her out, I can see that she has a real regard for you. See her, act the part of confessor to our household, and you will soon ascertain the true state of her feelings about the match; and if you are satisfied that it is in accordance with her own views and wishes, you cannot hesitate to put the seal to the compact."

"I do not feel myself quite justified," said Burford, "in taking that course; nor, indeed, do I quite see the necessity of my volunteering so extraordinary a task. Lady Hester is much more likely to confide the real state of her feelings to you, a beloved brother, than to his tutor, whose magisterial prerogative never was intended to extend to the female branches of the family."

"As you will, Charles," said Lord Malvern; "all I mean is — as I cannot care much about Lord Elmsdale — if you find her satisfied and happy, your objections about marrying her will be at an end. I know what an infernal explosion your refusal will cause, if the illustrious head of our house has set his mind upon it; and, therefore, as a personal favour to me, say 'ay' to my proposition."

"Ay, then, be it," said Burford; "I agree to the terms — why should I not?"

"Done, then," said the pupil; "so let us set about our preparations, and once more for my native land, for a return to which I begin to feel as anxious as a Swiss. I wonder, by the way, who will be Hester's bridesmaids? our dear Anne is too for advanced — is not she?"

"I believe there is no statute of limitations touching that matter," said Burford.

"I dare say Miss Oldham will be one."

"Probably, my Lord," said Burford, "a charming person, too."

"Come now, Mr. Burford, no nonsense," said Lord Malvern; "let us have no joking; as the 'illustrious' says, I cannot bear a joke."

"I assure you, Malvern," said the mentor, "I never was less inclined to joke in my life than at this moment: I merely said what I think, and what I know you think, that Miss Oldham is a charming person."

"Ah!" said Lord Malvern, "my dear Charles, if the day should ever come, and I am my own master, I know nothing much more likely to secure happiness than a match with Miss Oldham; she is so amiable, so handsome, and so fond of Hester, and so fond of all of us — she already seems one of the family; but it would be downright barbarity in me to lead her astray with the hope of marriage — which, in spite of your notions of its awful responsibility I should delight to offer her — during my father's life-time."

"I really do not see," said Burford, "what his objections could be: she is of a noble family: not rich — but what of that?"

"Oh! my dear Charles," said Lord Malvern, "the 'illustrious' has settled my fate already. I have a wife growing up for me — a minor, with millions. He has never yet confided the name of this Eldorado princess to me, but I think I can guess; and as for Elizabeth Oldham, I might as well, or better, for all I know, mention our dear old Anne Everingham to him as the object of my affections. No, I honestly admit my firm belief, that in Miss Oldham every thing likely to insure domestic comfort is combined; but I am equally conscious that I should be doing her gross injustice, by encouraging the idea of a successful issue to our attachment, and I have therefore felt it my duty to withdraw myself entirely."

"Will not your anticipated meeting renovate the dormant embers?" said Burford.

"No," said Lord Malvern: "it may cost me a struggle, and may occasion me pain, scarcely outweighed by the pleasure I may fairly receive in again seeing and conversing with her; but I hope I have strength of mind sufficient to support me in acting upon a principle which I know to be just and honourable, and which I have determined rigidly to adopt."

"Far be it from me," said Burford, "to doubt your

strength of mind; what I doubt, is your just estimate of the power you will have to contend with. However, we shall see," continued he; "all I am anxious about at this moment is, that if you, in your conversation with Lady Hester, have reason to think that my suspicions of her disinclination to her marriage are correct, you will aid me in escaping from the performance of the duty demanded of me."

"And all I bargain for," said Lord Malvern, "is, that if I should find your estimate of the power of Elizabeth Oldham as just as that which you have formed of the responsibility of marrying an unwilling couple, you will not laugh at my vanity, nor show me up to the 'illustrious' for having sinned against his implied commands, by the renewal of an old attachment for as lovely and, as I believe, as amiable a girl, as ever breathed the air of heaven."

The reader should be informed that this conversation occurred at Tours, whither Lord Malvern and his "fidus Achates," had betaken themselves on their road to Spain; and whence, very shortly after the arrival of Lord Snowdon's letter, which reached them at that place, they started for England, *viâ* Paris.

Meanwhile, the preparations for Lady Hester's marriage went on. Lady Katherine Oldham, and her daughter, had not yet arrived in London, and neither Lady Hester nor her friend had ventured to attack Lord Elmsdale in the shape of appeal. Lord Snowdon, in whose presence all was calm and tranquil, felt assured that he was sailing smoothly along in his great undertaking of securing his own happiness, and promoting that of every body else connected with him; while this visit to Downing Street had, as was anticipated it might probably do, afforded him another subject for self-gratulation, and a faint hope of the possibility of realising his dearest political hopes.

Lady Hester's trouble and anxiety daily increased. She saw herself gradually approaching the vortex which was to engulf her earthly happiness, without having the power of resisting the influence which was involving her. In the arrival of her brother and his companion she saw nothing but horror; and, as yet unable to ascertain the real state of

Miss Oldham's feelings, she remained wholly unprepared with any intelligence likely to soften the asperity of the blow which poor Lord Malvern would most certainly receive, in the astounding intelligence of her approaching marriage with his father.

At length, she heard that Lady Katharine and her daughter had arrived at their house at Richmond, where it was intended they should remain for the present, and whither Lord Snowdon suggested that Lady Hester should go and make them a visit. To this proposition she most readily assented; and an arrangement was entered into by the marquess for the completion of his scheme, which would make the thing agreeable to all parties.

The marquess had solicited Miss Oldham to sit for her picture. Lady Katharine had been charmed with the request, and, as it appears, was cooping up her daughter in the country under a strict regimen of diet and exercise, in order to get her into good looks. It was now settled that Lady Katharine and Miss Oldham should come into town on the following day; that the marquess and his betrothed should proceed to one of the most eminent living artists — (him upon whom they believed the mantle of our late illustrious Lawrence to have fallen,) — and after examining his gallery, impart to him Miss Oldham's intention of sitting for a whole length portrait. And then Miss Oldham, as specially instructed by Lady Katharine, was to pout a little, and look cross, and declare she would do no such thing unless the marquess would sit for another whole length; and this scene, which had been actually rehearsed at Richmond between the mother and daughter, was to be enacted in the studio of the painter, who would naturally join his solicitation to that of the young lady, and so secure to himself a double job.

This *effect* having been produced, the *young folks* were to return home, and subsequently the marquess and *his* daughter, and Lady Katharine and hers, were to proceed to Richmond; where, to use her ladyship's words, "dear Lord Elmsdale would, perhaps, be good-natured enough to join them at dinner."

The morning came, and with it Lady Katharine and Eliza-

beth. It is scarcely possible to describe the meeting of Miss Oldham and Lady Hester. They sprang towards each other as they had been wont to do in other days. But Miss Oldham seemed too much overpowered to return the warm embrace of her early friend: she sank on a sofa and wept, while Lady Hester held her hand, which was as cold as ice, between her own.

"Dear, dear!" said Lady Katharine. "Elizabeth — now, how silly — crying — do recollect where you are going presently; the painter will think you have got the ophthalmia, or that somebody has been ill-treating you."

Lord Snowdon luckily was not in the room; his dignity would, if not offended, have been strangely puzzled by the scene which was going on.

Had he been present, he would have undoubtedly considered the violence of Elizabeth's emotions quite uncalled for, and have deprecated with his strongest indignation, the character of the embrace of the long parted friends. Fortunately they had dried their tears, and recovered their composure, before his lordship joined the assembled party.

"I am happy, most happy," said his lordship, taking a hand of each, "to see you thus." Lady Hester's eye glanced to those of Miss Oldham; but she gleaned little satisfaction from their expression — an expression which ought, as a dutiful daughter, to have given her the greatest pleasure, but which, as an affectionate sister, she beheld with infinite pain.

"My dear Lord Snowdon," said Lady Katharine, who was one of his lordship's horrors — one of the necessary evils which his romantic attachment to her daughter had entailed upon him, but which he tolerated only until he had secured Elizabeth all to himself — "my dear Lord Snowdon, we have had such a worry getting here; the horses would not come over Hammersmith Bridge; — upon my word, I think it quite as handsome as the Menai, though the scenery, of course, is not so romantic. By the way, that puts me in mind, Lord Snowdon, of what you were once saying about Lady Lucy Longshanks, the tall girl, who afterwards married the great ironfounder, whose father came from Liverpool, where I first saw the Evanses. You

remember the Evanses, Elizabeth? — the old lady had been up to the top of Etna, with the famous traveller who was afterwards drowned, in the Phœbe sloop of war, which your dear cousin George commanded; — it was poor old Lord Tuzzle who got him the ship: and, by the way, I remember so well the day that Sir Benjamin Summertop called on me, and ——"

"The horses, you said," interrupted Lord Snowdon, "did not like the suspension bridge; we will return by the other road."

"To be sure," said Lady Katharine; "that's the advantage of having two ways to the same place. I recollect poor Admiral Twaddle telling me that they once caught a great green grampus at sea, near the place where Captain Cook was killed; and by the way, what a striking incident that was."

"Very striking, indeed," said the marquess, who would not so long have endured the incoherences of this Aircastle in petticoats, if he had not perceived that his daughter and his future wife were, as he thought, renewing their former intimacy exactly as he wished; Lady Hester forcing herself, during her father's presence, into a sort of formality wholly unnatural to herself, and entirely inconsistent with her original feelings towards Elizabeth, but which, after the interchange of a few sentences, seemed to grow more natural.

"But what amused me so much," continued Lady Katharine, "was the history of their killing the grampus. I told it once to Colonel Buckskin, who, by the way, was the — let me see, he has been dead now eighteen years — he married the widow of an officer who was killed in Spain, the year that Covent Garden playhouse was burnt down, and *he* compared it to the wonderful run of a stag that was started from a cart, somewhere in Windsor Forest, which ran all the way to Bagshot, from Bagshot across the country to Odiham, and then back to Murrell Green, where they killed him."

"Killed him did they?" said the marquess.

"Killed him!" repeated Lady Katharine triumphantly.

I am glad of that," said his lordship. "Do you know,

Lady Katharine, I was afraid they might have run him another day. — Elizabeth — Hester — I must break in upon your *tête-à-tête,* because we — that is, Miss Oldham and I — are under an engagement to our artist; thence we shall return, and then be at your commands for Richmond."

"How do you go, papa?" said Lady Hester.

"If Miss Oldham has no objection," said the marquess, "I propose driving her *en cabriolet.*"

"Your wishes are commands," said Miss Oldham, smiling sweetly, as the marquess thought — odiously, as Lady Hester fancied.

"Then go your ways, dear," said Lady Katharine. "Now remember, Elizabeth, my condition for your sitting. I have told her, Lord Snowdon, exactly what poor dear Mr. Oldham said to me. He was painted by Sir Joshua when he was a little boy, (long before *my* time, of course,) with a Vandyke frill round his neck, and his hand upon his dog's head, and that dog lived for nearly twenty years after. By the way, one of the most curious things that ever happened befel that animal: coming down by Whitehall, just by the corner house where that baron lived who screwed up our fireplaces, and ——"

"My dear Lady Katharine," said the marquess, "tell Hester the story of the dog, for we must go: it will interest her, she is extremely fond of dogs. Come, Elizabeth, — we shall be back soon; and remember, Hester dear, if Emsdale calls, present him to Lady Katharine, and communicate her kind invitation to Richmond."

"I'll not forget," said Lady Hester, struck with amazement at the altered and easy manner of her quondam friend, under the extraordinary alteration in her circumstances.

"But, my dear, I was talking of the dog," continued Lady Katharine, the moment they were out of the room, "this dog came all the way from Vienna, where Mr. Oldham's family were then living; and I must tell you — it is so very remarkable — a Captain Fraser — Fraser, I think, was the name, who lived down in Warwickshire, near Stratford-on-Avon — by the way, what a man Shakspeare was—(this, however, *par parenthèse,*)—this Captain Fraser

became acquainted, somehow or other, it don't the least matter how, with a Mrs. Wildman. I don't think she was any relation to the man who wrote upon bees — by the way, what wonderful creatures bees are — and this Mrs. Wildman had a son, who married a Miss Cazey, of Tipperary, who, I recollect, was drowned crossing from Portpatrick to Donaghadee, which was considered a most remarkable circumstance. By the way, an old sea-officer told me ——"

Hereabouts, when it was quite evident that Lady Katharine had irrecoverably lost her late husband's little dog, Lord Elmsdale was announced. Lady Hester did as she had been desired to do, and presented him to Lady Katharine, communicating, at the same time, her ladyship's invitation.

"I am very sorry," said his lordship, "but I am engaged to-day." It may be here observed, that with the fewest possible exceptions, his lordship spoke in monosyllables, and hated volubility in others, as cautiously as he avoided it himself.

"Fine weather, my lord," said Lady Katharine, who felt that she must say something.

"Hot," said his lordship.

"It never can be too hot for *me*," said her ladyship. "By th way, I recollect being one night at the Opera — before your time, dear Hester — when Catalani was first here, and a magnificent singer she was — her person was so fine; — that's what I was saying the other day to Sir Willoughby Wallingham (and he is really a judge of this sort of thing), he was our minister at Florence for a great many years, and married the daughter of the Duchess of Doubletie, who afterwards ran away with Sir Hector O'Flanagan, who, by the way, was shot in a duel with a brother of that late Miss Shangley, whom you have seen with Elizabeth ——"

Lord Elmsdale looked at Lady Katharine during this torrent, with his eyes and mouth open; and when she paused for breath, said "Ah!"

"It *is* said," continued Lady Katharine, "not that I believe it entirely, that she might have married the Persian

ambassador. By the way, do you recollect what that dear Mumbledy Fum said one day? Somebody said to him, 'I am told, sir, you worship the sun in your country?' Yes,' said his excellency, 'and so would you in yours, if you ever could see him.' He, he, he!"

"Good," said Lord Elmsdale.

"Don't you think, Lady Katharine," said Lady Hester, "that we had better go to luncheon? We shall have the absentees return before we are ready to start."

"With all my heart," said her voluble ladyship; "as for myself I never eat any luncheon. I remember Doctor Boss—oh! he was such a man—I'm sure I never shall forget him—impossible—my dear, he cured Lady Rounceval and her seven daughters of the scarlet fever, after they had all been given over by the whole of the faculty. By the way, it's a curious fact, that family—the eldest——"

This was too much even for ice to bear. Lord Elmsdale did not attempt to stop the current of words, but dreading the biography of all the Rouncevals, none of whom he would have ever got rid of if her ladyship had wandered in her usual way, he rose from his seat, and opened the door which led to the dining-room, where the luncheon was laid.

Further his lordship did not venture to proceed; but having seen the ladies seated, made his bow, and with it a sign to Lady Hester, that he could endure the noise of her visiter no longer.

"Then we don't see you to-day, my lord?" said Lady Katharine.

"No—not to-day."

"I am extremely sorry—I——"

"Thanks," said his lordship; "adieu: you come back—when, Lady Hester?"

"To-morrow, I believe."

"Oh, dear no!" said, or rather screamed, Lady Katharine; "you must spare her till Friday, she will soon be your own entirely. As a cousin of mine, Charles Musgrave used to say, if you go more than ten miles to

dinner, you must sleep where you dine, and breakfast where you sleep. He was a ——"

"I shall be here to-morrow," said his lordship.

"Ah, it will be useless," said Lady Katharine, archly; 'we will keep her on purpose to vex you."

"Good morning," was the answer; and so his lordship, fairly driven out, retired from the Niagara-like rush of words which dashed in torrents from the vermillion*ed* lips of his new old acquaintance, not much gratified by the reflection that she was speedily to become a near connexion.

During this period, and a still longer one, in which her ladyship never gave Lady Hester the opportunity of edging in one syllable, the noble marquess was flourishing his beautiful bride elect through the streets in his cab. It was the deciding day — the drive was the practical announcement of her acceptance of his hand, and he was in high spirits. Peculiar care had been bestowed upon his toilet, and he was admirably made up for the occasion. They reached the house of the artist. The servant was desired not to announce the marquess, whose cabriolet bore no distinctive marks of honour upon its panels, because, as his lordship told his Dulcinea, he liked to see professional men at their ease, to obtain their disinterested opinions, if possible, and hear their remarks, as applied generally to their art, without being either guided or restrained by the presence of persons to whom it must be naturally expected they looked up, and who might be supposed to influence their views and observations.

The marquess and Miss Oldham were ushered into the gallery, where stood some admirable specimens of the art of portrait-painting; the likenesses were excellent, and the tone and quality of the pictures eminently good.

"This will do," said the marquess to Miss Oldham; "see how beautifully this face is painted, and how graceful the figure is: it is almost as good as Lawrence ——"

The gallery-door opened, and presented to the view of the visiters the artist in *propriâ personâ;* his eye flashed a sort of recognition of the marquess as he advanced, and

when he had made his bow to Miss Oldham, the marquess whispered to her, "he knows me."

"Pray, sir," said the marquess, not quite pleased with the sort of smiling good-nature which illuminated the painter's countenance, "what is your charge for a whole length?"

"That depends upon circumstances," said the Apelles. "I think I have the pleasure of recognising your countenance — rather a familiar one to the public eye. I should say — you'll excuse me — a half length, or a small whole length, would suit your purpose best, if it's for a print, or any thing of that sort."

"I believe, sir," said the marquess, "that I am the best judge of those particulars."

"Oh! to be sure," replied the painter, — "he, he, he! I really can*not* help laughing when I look at you. I am sure you'll excuse me; but there *is* something so irresistibly comic — he, he — in the expression of your countenance; I never can get you out of my head as the marquess in the Cabinet."

"Sir, you are pleased to be extremely facetious," said Lord Snowdon; "but as I have not yet had the honour of a seat there, I see no particular reason for your excessive mirth. I ask you a plain question, sir; I expect a simple answer."

"I hope I have not offended you," said the painter; "merit like yours begets popularity — popularity produces notoriety, the tax that all men in your situation are doomed to pay. I do assure you that no person in the world would be less disposed to offer an affront to any gentleman in your profession than myself; but as I have just said, the name of Buggins is so intimately associated in my mind with fun and comicality, that even when I have the pleasure of seeing you off the stage in my own house, and in your own character, I cannot divest myself of the belief that I am as well known to *you* as you are to *me*, and the rest of your numerous supporters in box, pit, and gallery."

"Miss Oldham, this way," said the marquess. "Sir, — I have not the honour to be the person with whom you

presume to fancy yourself so extraordinarily intimate. We have no further business here."

"I really am quite ashamed," said the painter, whose countenance lengthened from the round and mirthful into the long and doleful, at the evident mistake he had made, and the still more evident anger of his visiter in consequence.

"Can I? ——"

"No, sir," said Lord Snowdon, "my cabriolet is at the door. If you will permit me to ring the bell, I ——"

"Allow me, sir," said the artist; "indeed — I ——"

"No matter, sir," said his lordship, handing Miss Oldnam down stairs; "our acquaintance has been short, and I fear unprofitable to you; but it may be of some use in making you aware for the future, sir, of the difference which in reality exists between the Marquess of Snowdon and a Covent Garden player. Come, Elizabeth."

To say any thing was clearly useless. The artist was a sufficiently good judge of expression, to know that any attempt at palliation would make matters worse. He saw all the contents of Le Brun's *portefeuille*, darting at once over the irritated nobleman's countenance; while Elizabeth, who with all her admiration for his lordship's rank and dignity, was sensitively alive to the violence of his rage if once excited, cast an importuning look at the unhappy painter, which fully confirmed him in his determination of wiping up what had happened, without saying any thing more, as he phrased it, "good, bad, or indifferent."

"Contemptible quack!" said his lordship, when they were re-seated in the cabriolet; "daubs! — how any body can fancy *that* man a painter I cannot imagine. I am glad we went, Elizabeth, because now we can have no doubt but that his rival must be his superior; the sign-painter at Shuttlework is more than his equal."

Elizabeth said nothing — but she heard, every now and then, in a sort of whisper which his lordship did not mean to be audible — "impertinent puppy"—"stupid beast," and other little words, which, like the faint flashes from a volcano, gave her to understand that the fiery strife was still raging within.

They speedily reached the rival's studio; and there his lordship resolved not to expose himself to a chance of the degrading comparison to which he had just been subjected He sent up his card, and was met on the stairs by a very different person from the rough, straight-forward, ill-starred professor, whom he had quitted in disgust.

"These, Elizabeth," said his lordship, looking at the different pictures through the glass, which his friend Wiseman had pronounced utterly useless for his lordship's complaint, "these are very beautiful—Ah! how very like — Lady Brompton — amazingly good — and Sir David Dullmire — admirable! You have been extremely successful, Mr. Mirrorton."

"I am much flattered by your lordship's goodness," said the obsequious canvass-coverer.

"I see," said his lordship, "a list of your terms here— there can be no question about those. I think this young lady would not make a bad subject for a whole length from your pencil."

"Oh! my lord," said Mirrorton, performing the grand Koo Too, "if artists always had such subjects, they would stand much higher in the estimation of the world than they do."

"Very pretty, indeed," said his lordship. "We are rather pressed for time, and therefore our sittings might begin as soon as you please."

"Whenever your lordship chooses," said Mr. Mirrorton.

"Friday — we shall be in town on Friday, Elizabeth?" said the marquess.

"Yes."

"Why, then, Friday let it be," said his lordship.

"At what hour shall we say, my lord?" asked the painter.

"One—Elizabeth, will one suit you?" asked the "gallant gay Lothario."

"Oh! perfectly," replied the young lady.

"I was going to venture a suggestion, my lord," said Mr. Mirrorton. "I have been very successful in grouping the younger branches of families; and I was thinking, my lord — I have not the honour of knowing enough of your

lordship's family to speak with any confidence — but if your lordship had another daughter of nearly the same age——"

"Sir," said the marquess, "what do you mean?"

"I presume this young lady *is* your lordship's daughter?" said, or rather faltered, the artist, who began to doubt whether he was on perfectly safe ground.

"Sir, you do presume extremely," said the marquess. 'Miss Oldham, we will talk this matter over — I am not quite sure, sir, that the young lady *can* sit on Friday — however, we will consult Lady Katharine, and let Mr. — Mr. — this gentleman know."

"I am afraid, my lord," said Mr. Mirrorton, "that I have unintentionally offended your lordship; but it was natural to think — that——"

"The habit of thinking, sir," said the marquess, "is one which should be very cautiously indulged in, by persons of your condition. Good morning, sir."

Saying which, the defeated nobleman descended the staircase of his second persecutor, whose exquisite likenesses were immediately designated as things fit only to light fires; and in a temper of mind not to be described, his lordship drove his half-trembling, half-laughing affianced Elizabeth, back to Grosvenor Square, in order to *soothe* himself with the interminable loquacity of her impracticable mother.

During their absence upon their pictorial progress, Lady Hester had contrived to extract a grain or two of sense from the heap of chaff which had been winnowed through the lips of Lady Katharine. But in all she could collect, she could find nothing in the slightest degree indicative of those feelings on the part of Miss Oldham towards her brother, which she had so warmly, so earnestly, and so confidently expected. There seemed to be, at least as far as she could make out, something like an opposition on the part of Elizabeth to the match, on the score of the marquess's age; but her conduct towards him, and the way in which Lady Katharine spoke of her feelings with respect to him, gave Lady Hester no idea that the attachment of her beloved Alfred had ever been seriously reciprocated.

She resolved not to make up her mind too hastily, but

to wait till an opportunity might occur for a private conversation with her former friend. There was, however, no time to be lost, because Lord Malvern's intended visit tc England was now announced; and as his affirmative answer to his father's invitation to her marriage had been received, it was quite clear that the arrival of her brother might, if he wished it, succeed that event by not more than a day or two. At Richmond the opportunity for their *tête-à-tête* would no doubt occur; and to Richmond the party, according to the original arrangement, proceeded in the afternoon, not one syllable having been mentioned by the marquess on the subject of the morning's excursion, except a little history of their having visited the two leading artists of the day, and decided that neither of them were capable of satisfactorily transferring to canvass the beautiful features of the future Marchioness of Snowdon.

CHAPTER VI.

' Is it not odd, Charles," said Lord Malvern to Burford, as they were travelling towards Paris, " that Hester herself should not have written one line to me?"

" No," said Burford, " that does not strike me as odd: I conclude she knew that the marquess had written; she had no information to add; and knowing that she should so soon see you, I suppose she considered writing unnecessary."

" I have strange misgivings about her marrying that man," said his lordship. " To be sure, I know little of him, and it is extremely wrong to be prejudiced; but I have a way of forming sudden likings and dislikings. I am exactly the reverse of my father in that respect: he is hard to be pleased, and slow to be won. I dare say he finds that Lord Elmsdale has great talents for silence; and to

a man like my excellent parent, that I believe to be a most agreeable recommendation."

"I cannot exactly understand how Lady Hester can like him," said Burford; "at least, judging by what I have heard her say of other people."

"I dare say she does not care one straw about him," said Lord Malvern; "depend upon it the 'illustrious' has said 'fiat, and there's an end. I should be too happy if it were not the case, because Hester is too good and too amiable to be thrown away upon a man who could not appreciate her."

"Is there any man so dull, or so debased as that?" said Mr. Burford.

"Upon my life, Charles," said Lord Malvern, "I shall begin to think you are in love with her yourself. I can tell you this, that if you were, and she reciprocated your affection, and I were her father, I would rather see her married to *you* with her own twenty thousand pounds and your income, than to Lord Elmsdale with his twenty thousand a year. This I know would be treason at Lionsden or in Grosvenor Square, but here it is plain honest truth."

"I am truly grateful, my dear Malvern," said Burford, "for this ingenuous declaration of your good opinion, but let me entreat you never to mention the subject again. Thoughts once excited are with difficulty suppressed. The immeasurable distance between your father's station and mine would of itself render all such 'imaginings vain,' even to absurdity. Lady Hester's fate is now definitively sealed; and therefore now, although never before, (and never again, must you recur to the subject, which is of vital, or rather deadly importance to *me*,) I admit, in the strong confidence of friendship which exists between us, that, although I have successfully struggled with feelings which have nearly broken my heart, and have, I trust, conquered a passion which it would have been worse than madness to cherish, my whole heart and soul were devoted to your sister. For Heaven's sake, Malvern, bear with this confession, which will relieve my mind of a most oppressive burden. I have been surprised into making it, but I do not regret it, because you must be now satisfied of its unimportance as

relates to *her*, and of the anxiety I feel to escape the horror that awaits me in the proposition of uniting her to another."

"Horror, indeed, Burford!" said Lord Malvern, throwing himself back in the carriage. "Hang it, Charles, why didn't you make this confidence sooner? I see no such immeasurable space between my father and you. What my father is, I shall some day be, and *I* am conscious of no such distance. I believe Hester might have done any thing with the marquess: she is the only thing in the world of which I believe him to be fond. He has made this match for her, because he thinks it desirable for her; and, no doubt, she has yielded, for fear of irritating him; but——"

"At all events," said Burford, "any farther discussion is now useless. My duty dictated the course I had to pursue; and until it was beyond a possibility that my presumption could harm or annoy *her*, or any body else, I maintained a profound silence on the subject Your father has increased my debt of gratitude by this last piece of preferment, which I can now conscientiously accept, for I have injured him not; on the contrary, my life should be freely devoted to the happiness of either of his children."

"I wish to Heaven it had been devoted to that of one of them!" said Lord Malvern. "How dull I must have been! Now I look back upon past days, I recollect a thousand little nothings which make something in the aggregate, and which might have opened my eyes, if I had not been as blind as a buzzard."

"I rather think," said Burford, "your eyes were somewhat too constantly fixed upon Miss Oldham, to see much else when she was present."

"Tell me, Charles," said Lord Malvern, "now be candid — I hate flattery — I can't bear beating about the bush — tell me honestly, do you think Hester was attached to you?"

"Never did there pass a word between us on the subject," said the venerable tutor.

"A word — what need of words?" replied the hopeful pupil. "Isn't it strange, Hester tells me every thing; and yet, now I come to think of it, she has not only never

mentioned a syllable in her letters which could lead me to any thing like a suspicion that she cared for you, but has totally and studiously avoided ever mentioning your name. If I had not been fast asleep, I might thence have guessed that she had some reason for a silence, which, if you had been wholly indifferent to her, she, in all probability, would not have maintained."

"Pray, talk no more of it," said Burford; "I am in your hands. I have nothing to reproach myself with but poverty and obscurity, and these are not faults of my own commission. All I ask — all I implore of you — is, to rescue me from the performance of the ceremony!"

"Be assured, Charles," said his lordship, extending his hand to his companion — "would to Heaven I could do more! — *that*, however, at all events, I promise you. To make it certain, be ill, if you choose, at Paris; I will run over without you. Why go at all? Why, even, if you escape the actual performance of the ceremony, agitate yourself with the sight of preparations, the completion of which is to seal your disappointment?"

"That is sealed already," said Burford. "I think I ought to go: I ought not to suffer my feelings to interfere with the expression of my thanks to the marquess for the living; and I ——"

"Would you see Hester, Charles?" asked Lord Malvern.

"I think I could," said Burford, "and bear it."

"What did you say to *me*, only three days since?" said Lord Malvern. "'I do not doubt your strength of mind, but I suspect the justness of your estimate of the power with which you will have to contend:' — no — take my advice — stay on this side of the Channel."

"We'll see," said Burford, who, firm as he was of purpose, rigidly faithful as he had been to his duty, and perfectly convinced as he was of the utter hopelessness of his case, could scarcely command sufficient courage to take the deciding measure of abandoning his once beloved for ever, without one parting word, one parting look.

It will be easily gathered from this conversation that Lord Malvern, although destined to succeed to his father's

titles and estates, inherited none of those qualities for which his noble parent was so pre-eminently distinguished. It is generally admitted and very frequently proved, that virtue and genius, and all the natural good qualities which men possess, are derived from their mothers. No family afforded a stronger illustration of this doctrine than that of Lord Snowdon: both his children were as unlike himself in character and disposition as light is to dark; and, although the praise which it is impossible to withhold from their generosity, affability, and total want of affectation or pretension, may not upon this principle sound complimentary to their surviving parent, it is but a just tribute to the admirable parent who was gone, and who, as the calumnious world said, had sunk under a tyranny which she was not constitutionally strong enough to endure.

Burford was the oldest and earliest acquaintance Lord Malvern possessed: at the university, and since he had quitted it, they had been constant companions. Wherever they travelled, into whatever society they went, Burford's reception and popularity were of themselves sufficient proofs of his merits and qualifications. The young nobleman felt how much benefit he had derived from the association; and while his tutor's social qualities and general accomplishments had rendered him essential as a companion, his higher attributes had secured for him the affection of a friend.

It was natural in the ardour of youth, replete with the feelings which such a connexion was likely to inspire, that the generous Lord Malvern should readily receive an impression of the superior advantages of a match for his sister with the object of her choice, over a union with a man for whom, judging by their usual sympathy in taste, he felt quite convinced she could not ever care — His intimacy with his Mentor had to his eye smoothed off all the angles which to a stranger would appear unconquerable obstacles to his fitting into the family circle of Lionsden; and all the regret he experienced at the communication just made to him was, that it had not been made earlier, and before the conclusion of a treaty which waited only his arrival for its final ratification.

Little did Lady Hester, who, in her own sphere, and amidst all her own doubts and difficulties, was labouring to ascertain the real state of Miss Oldham's inclinations — for heart she soon discovered she had none — little did *she* think how far the discussion of a subject had been carried by her affectionate brother, to which she never permitted herself to recur, and upon which she had spoken to no one, except to "dear Anne." All her efforts, as far as the dreaded subject was concerned, were directed to strengthening her mind to the endurance of the last blow in the pronunciation of the final blessing upon her marriage, by the being who alone could have insured her earthly happiness. A hope still gleamed in the distance — "He never could have the heart to do it:" — she knew his feelings — she had seen the struggles he had overcome — had witnessed the pain his silence cost him — she felt almost assured that no circumstance could induce *him* to sanctify their eternal separation, or bless her in the possession of another. It was upon this belief of a knowledge of his real sentiments, and in the hope of his pity and tenderness — now to be shown to her in no other way — that she yet existed. How far she judged him rightly we have already seen.

"Dear Lady Hester," said Lady Katharine, bursting into the room, "are you here alone? — where is Elizabeth? — I thought she was here too — I suppose with the marquess, walking in the shrubbery. My poor dear uncle, the bishop, used to say to me — you remember his picture my love, over the library fire-place at Horsedon; it was painted by Sir Joshua — one of his best — not faded in the least; — by the way, I remember, many years ago, seeing Hogarth's picture at the Foundling Hospital — which, in my poor judgment, is at best a most equivocal institution, — all the colours gone — pale as a primrose ——."

"What shall we do after luncheon, to-day, Lady Katharine?" said Lady Hester, who was used to her companion, and never attempted to regain the lost thread of her conversation.

"Whatever you please, my dear," replied her ladyship. "You know we have all sorts of pleasant drives about us; go to Hampton Court, perhaps. By the way, what a man

that Cardinal Wolsey was ! as I was once saying to Sir ——, dear me, what's the man's name, with the narrow-rimmed hat ? — he married a daughter of the famous geologist, who went afterwards into Spain or Germany, or somewhere ; — he was a friend of our friend young Richardson."

"And pray," said Lady Hester, "who *is* Mr. Richardson ? "

"Oh, he's a great favourite of ours," said Lady Katharine ; "his mother was aunt to Lord Dolbey's cousin, an Irish commodore, and he is so agreeable ; and, by the way, is quartered at Hampton Court just now."

"He seems to be quite aware of his popularity here, I think, Lady Katharine," said Lady Hester.

"Oh, my dear, remember," said Lady Katharine, "there's nothing can blind a man to his own popularity ; Richardson sings sweetly — you *must* hear his guitar. I think, with the exception of poor dear Mr. Birtwhistle, who married a second cousin of my Mr. Oldham's, and who died eight or ten years ago, I never heard any thing so beautiful in all my life. You have heard Elizabeth attempt the thing — hers is not a failure. I give you my word she had no master but Frederick Richardson."

"Why," said Lady Hester, smiling, "an agreeable master generally makes an apt pupil."

"I believe that," said Lady Katharine, "and that is what your father thinks has been so serviceable to your brother in his connection with Mr. Burford. He has the highest possible opinion of Mr. Burford. I remember observing to Miss Everingham one day, that I thought Mr. Burford one of the best-mannered men I ever saw in society. I knew something of an aunt of his — a Mrs. Howard — a very charming woman ; she went to Cheltenham for the benefit of her health, and, as Dr. Slipsby of Bath used always to add — died in consequence."

Lady Hester, who believed Lady Katharine, notwithstanding the flightiness of her manner, and the unconnected absurdity of her conversation, to be a shrewd woman, was by no means pleased with the observation which she had made upon Mr. Burford's good qualities, in the way of a reply, or rather of an illustration of her axiom,

as to the influence of an "agreeable master to an apt pupil."

"Mr. Richardson," continued Lady Katharine, "is full of talent, and so handsome, Lady Hester; — it is not always that personal attractions are supported by mental acquirements. I remember Lady Bustle, whose husband, poor dear old man, died of three slices of venison at a corporation dinner in his own borough — it is wonderful how some people eat, to be sure; for my part, as I was saying one day to Elizabeth, I cannot understand the difference of disposition and constitution in the same species. By the way, poor old Lady Bustle lost the use of her limbs by going to a fête in a foggy night; — supped in a tent — and sat on the damp grass; — poor thing, never was able to move afterwards, and is now pulled about in one of those chairs — which in my time were called Merlin's chairs — and a very curious exhibition that man Merlin had: there was a large Turk swallowed stones; close by the concert-rooms in Hanover Square, where the bazar is to be. By the way, have you made any thing for the poor Poles? Poor dear things, I am so distressed about them, you can't think. I don't exactly understand what it is they want; but when one hears of all those interesting Skoes and Skies without a home, or bread, or money, and all that sort of thing, it really does go to one's heart. By the way, Mr. Corpsicum, dear little man, calls them the bare Poles."

"I have never yet ventured to make my appearance in the character of *boutiquière*," said Lady Hester.

"Elizabeth has sometimes," said Lady Katharine. "I assure you she was extremely successful at our fair at Horsedon. Mr. Richardson acted as her cavalier; and he got us the band of his regiment, and Elizabeth and he made a whole troop of little lancers; you can't think how ingenious Mr. Richardson is in that way. Don't you — now, do tell me, dear Lady Hester — don't you find Elizabeth very much improved since you last met?"

"Very much," said Lady Hester; "she is suprisingly altered in manner."

"Oh, you know, poor dear thing," said Lady Katharine,

'she *was* but a child last year; as her uncle, Sir George, said, she was then a rosebud — and to be sure he could not say a sweeter thing — for to me, fond of flowers as I am, the rose, after all, is the sweetest; but she *is* improved."

"Her spirits," said Lady Hester, "are better than I ever remembered them."

"Why, my dear," said Lady Katharine, "she has every thing before her, as Frederick Richardson says. What an alliance she is about to make! — consider your father's position in the world. I do assure you, Hester, my love, when I first heard of it, I told her to decide for herself — never threaten — never press — never influence in marrying — that is my method. I am sure when I see such people as poor Lady Greystoke tacked to that mummy of a man that she married, because her mother beat her into it, I see enough to set me against compulsion. No: she has made her choice; and I see no reason why she should not be the happiest of her sex."

"Does your friend, Mr. Richardson, think her happiness so certain?" said Lady Hester, with an emphasis not usual in her conversation.

"Oh, poor dear fellow," said Lady Katharine, "of course, at his time of life, he sees every thing *couleur de rose* — my favourite tint — he is very much interested about her; so is every body who knows her. By the way, Major Sandiford, whose sister married my first cousin's third son — they are in Jamaica now — his regiment is there; and do *you* know, he got his promotion in a very extraordinary manner — his brother was married to a niece of General Flamborough, who lost his arm in the battle where your papa's nephew-in-law, as I call him, was wounded, and was cured, absolutely cured, by Mr. O'Doherty, the surgeon. The way they came to know Mr. O'Doherty was, that his mother was a grand-daughter of the Archbishop of ——"

—— Of what we are not destined to know; for the marquess and his betrothed arrived from their paradisiacal stroll in the grounds exactly at the moment when the see was to have been declared; and in an instant the voluble Lady Katharine glanced off from her point to an exclama-

tion of surprise at beholding the interesting couple before her.

"Lord Snowdon," said, or rather continued her ladyship, "we are going to drive over to Hampton Court after luncheon."

"Oh! do, do," said Miss Oldham; "and we'll make Frederick Richardson order the band to play for us, and——"

"I don't think," said the marquess, "that I shall be able to go with you; I must go into town for an hour or two."

"Well, then," said Lady Katharine, "we'll put it off till to-morrow."

"No, mamma," said Miss Oldham, "we may just as well go to Hampton Court as any where else, if Lord Snowdon is going into town."

"Ah, so we can, Elizabeth," said Lady Katharine, "because perhaps Frederick Richardson will come back and dine with us. You have no objection, Lord Snowdon?"

"I! Lady Katharine," said the marquess, "I can have no objection to any friend of yours. Is Elmsdale coming here to-day, Lady Hester?"

"I think not, sir," said Lady Hester, "he made no promise."

"If he should feel inclined to do so," said the marquess, "perhaps Lady Katharine would permit me to bring him down."

"I can have no objection to any friend of yours, Lord Snowdon," said Lady Katharine, repeating his lordship's words in a similar tone to that in which he had addressed them to her.

"Your ladyship is an excellent mimic," said the marquess, turning from her with a look of the most unqualified contempt.

"You'll have some luncheon with us, dear Lord Snowdon," said Elizabeth.

"None," said his lordship, "I never eat luncheon. You dine at seven, Lady Katharine?"

"Punctual, Lord Snowdon," said Lady Katharine.

The marquess then withdrew, and Elizabeth having, it

seemed, received some sign from his lordship's eye, known, it is imagined, only to those highly graduated in the free-masonry of love, followed him. Lady Katharine and Lady Hester proceeded to the dining-room to refresh themselves, where they were joined by Miss Oldham, after she had bidden an affectionate adieu to her future husband.

The visit at Richmond, which lasted another day, was to Lady Hester most unpleasant and most unsatisfactory. It was impossible for her not to feel that a surprising difference existed between her late friend, Miss Elizabeth Oldham, and her future mother-in-law, the intended Marchioness of Snowdon. There was an evident shyness on the part of the young lady of any reference to their former intimacy, or the subjects which they then found the most interesting topics of conversation; her kindness was forced, and her manner had assumed a style of constrained civility: she had made no allusion whatever to Lord Malvern, except once mentioning his name cursorily and carelessly in some ordinary discussion; and so remarkable had been her anxiety to avoid any particular communication with Lady Hester, and so perfect her address in carrying her point, that no opportunity for a *tête-à-tête* occurred during the whole of the time she remained at Lady Katharine's house.

Poor Lady Hester returned to town even more dispirited than she was when she left it. That Miss Oldham had entirely overcome—if she ever entertained any—all affection for Lord Malvern, was evident; and this gave pain to Lady Hester, because she was convinced of her brother's fidelity and constancy, and because she had hoped to find the proposed alliance with her father disagreeable to her friend, whom she then might have encouraged to avow her real feelings, and so eventually have secured her brother's happiness. Now her sorrow was greatly increased; for although she saw that Elizabeth cared nothing for Lord Malvern, she also saw that she cared very little more for her father. She seemed to live a life of continual excitement; all the former naturalness of her character appeared to have faded, and given place to an affected gaiety, and an assumed tone of superiority, which, let her adopt it in her intercourse with others as she might, was extremely ill-

placed, while associating with the daughter of the man from whose weakness alone she could derive any possible right to give herself such exceedingly unbecoming airs.

"My grief is by no means alleviated," said Lady Hester to Miss Everingham, on her arrival at home, "by what I have seen at Richmond. True it is that I must have been deceived in my belief of Elizabeth Oldham's affection for Alfred. But this will not, I fear, cure him of his attachment to her; in short, I believe that I have hitherto been deceived in her manner altogether, for if I did not know the contrary to be the case, I should now be convinced — at least as much convinced as I was in the case of Alfred — that she is at this moment desperately in love with a Mr. Frederick Richardson, a cornet of lancers, who seems almost domesticated with them."

"Do you really believe that?" said Miss Everingham — the "hope that *springs* eternal in the human breast," suddenly giving a *jump* in hers — "do you think that she prefers *him*? but how can she, my dear? She has accepted the marquess, and the marriage is settled."

"It is possible," said Lady Hester, "for such affairs to go to a very considerable length, and yet the affections of the parties not keep pace with the preparations. I admit that I have been once deceived in Miss Oldham: I may be so now; and after all, what I misconstrued into feeling and affection may be nothing more than manner — a sort of *empressement* — a display of interest and attention — of devotion almost, to one object, while her heart, yet unconcerned, is devoted to another."

"It is not natural," said Miss Everingham, "for young females to possess this sort of duplicity; I can scarcely imagine any circumstance which would induce a girl to permit matters to go to the extreme length of accepting a man, and even settling the wedding day, while a feeling of devotion as you call it to another object existed in her heart."

"Oh, Anne," said Lady Hester, "it *is* possible — possible, too, without degradation or debasement to the victim of such a struggle."

"Why," said Miss Everingham, "would *you* — I put

it to yourself — would you submit to marrying Lord Elmsdale, if ——"

"There, there, my dear Anne," interrupted poor Lady Hester, "suppose no cases; imagine no possibilities; and, least of all, do not bring *me* forward as an example by which the conduct of others is to be regulated. Let my affections, my hopes, my happiness rest where they may, my father's commands are to me imperative; *my* case has no analogy to any other. That I love my father as a child ought to love, I know; but I feel that I fear him more than any child should: yet to see him in anger, to hear him, perhaps, curse me, I could not survive; and I know what would happen if I thwarted his intentions with regard to this marriage."

"That may be all very true," said Miss Everingham, in whose mind the overthrow of the marquess's union with Miss Oldham was an object of first-rate impontance; "but I do think, Lady Hester, there is another duty which you also owe your father. If you can imagine that Miss Oldham is really the heartless coquet which she seems to be, and that she is hurrying into a splendid alliance, merely because it *is* splendid, it is an obligation and an imperious one on your part, to open your father's eyes to ——"

"My dear friend," interrupted Lady Hester, "do you know so little of my father as to imagine that any living being dare venture to hint that he has been deceived — that he is the victim of treachery and duplicity? I would not attempt such a thing; besides in me it would have the appearance of anxiety to prevent his following his own inclinations, because his doing so might, in a domestic point of view, be unpleasant, and in a worldly point of view, disadvantageous to me. No: depend upon it I have no power to interfere. I may yet entertain a hope that nature will, some day, prevail over Elizabeth Oldham's art; and that if the case be as I suspect, my father will himself see through what I cannot but believe to be a heartless delusion."

All this was extremely filial and dutiful; but the blindness of love is always most complete when the disorder attacks the patient late in life. To Lord Snowdon, Eliza-

beth Oldham was perfection; all the little playfulnesses in which she occasionally indulged with the pet cornet of the family were so many evidences of ingenuousness and "naturalness," or as the poets call it, "single-mindedness, viridity of intellect, and freshness of character." Indeed (such is the force of sympathy upon some occasions), if the marquess entertained any suspicions about young Richardson (as his lordship was pleased to call him), it took quite a different direction from that of his intended wife. He fancied that Lady Katharine herself had some faint idea floating in what she called her mind, of the advantages of repairing the loss of her amiable daughter by the assumption of a young husband, in which project, supposing it to be in embryo, the marquess, under existing circumstances, was not so likely to see so much absurdity as he would have been the first to perceive under any others.

As for the marquess himself, occupations seemed to multiply upon his hands; for while he was maturing the arrangements for his own marriage — much of which, be it remembered, depended upon his son's agreement to certain propositions which he had to make — he was taking measures for the celebration of that of his daughter. Effect was again to be studied; and although the metropolis was but thinly peopled, he was laying plans to collect a sufficient number of his family connections to give *éclat* to the nuptial ceremony, which, as has already been hinted, was to be performed at that fashionable shrine of Hymen — St. George s, Hanover Square.

But this was not all. His lordship had been three or four times down to the bottom of Downing Street; he began to speak temperately of government measures; he dined with the Premier, and the next day, at breakfast, was loud in his praise. As an individual he was delightful; and so moderate in his politics, that it required but very little to make him follow such a man; if he could but be assured that the ministry would not refuse *this*; and if he might but be convinced that they would deny *that* — two points, in fact, only of secondary importance — he should feel very much inclined to support them; for, after all, a man's individual opinions ought to bend to the majority, and to

circumstances; and, as he was affectionately devoted to the king, it seemed to him really that it became a duty to uphold a government which the monarch sanctioned and maintained; and he did not know — Heaven was witness that he had no motive, other than a conscientious feeling — but it did not seem to him that when the state was agitated by a third party, more violent than either of the other two, the designs and principles of which were notoriously subversive of every thing like order, and the ancient institutions of the country, there could be very little question whether a man in *his* position should or should not add his influence, of whatever value it might be, to that party of the three to which the king gave his confidence.

This is the sort of language he used after dinner, at his own table, his countenance beaming with a look of candour and sincerity which nobody — who did not know him — could for a moment have doubted; and so he went on expatiating upon his honour and his feelings, his conviction and his independence, seeing before him more plainly and distinctly than the mighty murderer saw the "air-drawn dagger," the glittering musnud of the governor-general, surrounded by a crowd of royal victims, of rajahs, and residents, courtiers, and counsellors, crawling and cringing at his feet, while he, high amidst the motley group, stood noble and erect, the envied riband crossing his breast, giving new lustre to the glittering star it partly hid, which covered his ambitious heart. His bargain seemed to be in a fair way to its conclusion: five seats in one house, and an influence over seven votes in the other, were something — and just at such a time. And then his bride! What a splendid specimen of European beauty! and what an amiable recipient for presents from the sensitive and good-natured natives, which he himself durst not accept.

In his mind's eye, he saw a trembling prince imploring his excellency so to direct the march of an army that his particular territory might be spared the devastation which its course across it might produce. "You must make interest with the marchioness," said his lordship, in his musings; "she has more influence with the commander of

the forces than I." The prince, a much too well accustomed pupil of the school to doubt its meaning, would take the hint; the marchioness would be gratified with a small white handful of large diamonds, and the soldiers, instead of being sent through the fertile province of Munney-stumpum, would be ordered to traverse the arid district of Pinchapatam.

These dreams of his were very likely, indeed, to come true: his foot was already in the stirrup; it required but a helping hand to lift him to the seat; the reins at his command, what a magnificent course he would run! splendour unparalleled, beauty unmatched, magnificence yet unknown, were all to grace his oriental reign. Not a word had passed his lips; no human creature knew how far the compact had proceeded; and he lived in a state of constant agitation till the hour should arrive when all his honours should come thick upon him.

It was on the day succeding that in which the marquess had so far succeeded in his great speculations in public matters, that he received letters from his son, announcing his departure from Tours for Paris, and suggesting his probable arrival in London in ten days from the date of his letter.

"Hester, dear," said his lordship, "Elmsdale's arrangements are now completed, and Malvern will be here about the middle of next week. I have particular reasons, personal to myself, and not necessary to be mentioned at this moment, which induce me to accelerate our proceedings; therefore, if you please, let us fix this day fortnight for your marriage."

Lady Hester bowed her head, assentingly, but in silence.

"I have made out a list of those persons whom I should like to be present. The Salfords, the Havershams, and the Warringtons, have promised to come to town *expres*; Elmsdale's family have done the same; and I think we shall muster altogether about forty at breakfast. I had intended, you know, to have had the marriage solemnised here, in the drawing-room, but I think a better effect is produced by a church marriage: it seems more important, and brings the circumstance itself better before the world;

and, in fact, gives a greater sanction to the thing altogether; — so, make your arrangements. A little difficulty occurs about Miss Oldham: she wished, and so did her mother, that she should have been one of the bride's maids; but I think that it might, perhaps, cause something like *ridicule* — something that the newspapers might get hold of — considering how shortly afterwards she will assume so different a character in the family; she thought, dear soul, that you would make a point of it."

"Oh no, sir," said Lady Hester, "I make no points; indeed, I should have liked the whole thing to have been as private as is consistent with ——"

"Private, Lady Hester!" said his lordship; "why private, pray? Is the union of an English earl with the daughter of an English marquess a thing to be ashamed of? — an affair to be huddled up, and hurried over? Hester, you are like your brother: you never *will* have a proper estimate of your place in society, or of the duties which the importance of your station in the world necessarily imposes upon you."

"At all events, sir," said Lady Hester, cowering before the contemptuous look which her magnificent parent had cast upon her, "I have no desire that Miss Oldham should inconvenience herself, or displease *you*, by fulfilling an office, which I agree with you in thinking incompatible with her present position in our family."

"I am afraid, Lady Hester," said the marquess, "that Miss Oldham's present position in *my* family does not exactly please you. I have for years deprived myself of the comforts of a married life for your sake; I have devoted myself to your interests — sacrificed my own happiness to insure yours. I have completed the task which I set myself: I have succeeded in establishing you most honourably and happily; and now, madam, because I have made a selection from amongst our acquaintance of a young lady hitherto one of your greatest favourites and most intimate friends, you entirely change your manner and conduct towards her, and even sneer at what you are pleased to call that lady's present position in our family — *our* family, Lady Hester!"

"Indeed, indeed, you mistake me!" said Lady Hester; "I do assure you, I ——"

"There is no need of professions or protestations," said the marquess; "Miss Oldham is equally conscious with myself of this change; she feels it deeply, and complains to me of it bitterly."

"*I* am not conscious of it!" said Lady Hester, bursting into tears. "Believe me, my beloved father, that no thought but of anxiety for your happiness has ever crossed my mind since you announced your intention upon the subject of your marriage. If Miss Oldham's heart is free to give, to no one more worthy can she give it than to you; if ——"

"If!" echoed the marquess; "why start these doubts? Do you imagine that Lady Katharine has found it necessary to force her daughter's inclinations, Lady Hester?"

"No, sir, no! Spare me — spare me more! — Be assured that I have no object but that which I profess; that I am unconscious of any change in my conduct to Miss Oldham which is not justified by hers. Recollect, sir, when we last met, we met as friends of the same age, in habits of intimacy, and of unmixed confidence — so we parted; she returns, as I have already said, but with no wrong meaning, my dear father, in a different position: the very circumstance of our former unreserved intimacy renders our present intercourse the more constrained. Of this difference, I confess myself conscious, but it arises from no change of mine."

"I repeat what I at first said," replied Lord Snowdon: "I have made your happiness, and I *do* expect that you will not interrupt mine by any disrespectful conduct towards my future wife, whose importance and dignity I am determined most strictly and rigidly to uphold."

Lady Hester was on the point of renewing her declaration of a totally opposite feeling, when the door opened, and Lord Elmsdale was announced. Any interruption to such a dialogue was a relief — the present one, to be sure, was to Lady Hester the least agreeable which could have occurred; and this single fact will serve to prove the happy state to which the noble hero of our tale had already reduced his family.

It was in the course of the conversation which ensued that the wedding-day was finally fixed. The necessary arrangements were immediately entered upon; letters were despatched to the distant uncles and cousins, and invitations circulated to those whose presence was desired at the *déjeûner*. The marquess quitted the interesting conference to visit Downing Street; Lord Elmsdale mounted his horse, and took a canter through the parks; and Hester Plinlimmon shut herself into her dressing-room to think, to weep, and to pray.

CHAPTER VII.

THE journey of Lord Malvern and his tutor — if such he might still be considered — from Tours to Paris, was rendered more interesting than agreeable, by the circumstances which had occurred at its commencement. Burford felt his mind greatly relieved by the confidence which he had so unexpectedly been induced to make, and his companion was proportionally depressed, under the belief that Lady Hester had reciprocated his affection, and was now forced into a marriage which he felt assured she could not in her heart approve, and which yet he was proceeding to adorn and sanction by his presence.

It was late in the afternoon when the travellers reached that vast menagerie of monkeys and tigers, the French metropolis. They found their rooms prepared for their reception; and after refreshing themselves with a dinner admirably calculated for a *restaurant*, Burford expressed his intention of paying a visit to his mother and sister, who had been for some time residing in a small but extremely agreeable residence in the Allée des Veuves, leading out of the Champs Elysées.

"Shall I be *de trop?*" said Lord Malvern; "I have not seen either Mrs. Burford or Maria now for three years. I will go with you, if you like; if not, say so, and I will

dispose of myself in some of the five hundred theatres of this most frivolous town, till your return. In a city like this, which, after all, is more like an overgrown watering-place than the metropolis of a great country, a man who has nothing to do is, as an Irishman would say, sure to find plenty of employment."

"I shall be too happy if you will go with me," said Burford; "and they will, I am sure, be delighted to receive you."

"I am your man, then," said the young lord; "*allons!*"

And away they went across the Place Vendôme, along the Rue Rivoli, over the Place Louis Quinze, and so to the Champs Elysées. The night being bright and clear, they ordered no carriage for their return, and walked off, independent pedestrians.

They reached the peaceful residence of the amiable Mrs. Burford — a gentlewoman, at least in the second degree, as admitted even by Lord Snowdon; and there they found her and her daughter following the extremely unfrenchified fashion — the one of reading, and the other of working. The meeting between Mrs. Burford and her son was in the highest degree gratifying, and the affectionate kiss of the gentle Maria brought to Lord Malvern's mind his beloved sister, and the reception which he hoped so shortly to meet with in Grosvenor Square.

Maria, by the way (as Lady Katharine Oldham would have said), had grown into the bloom and grace of womanhood, since Lord Malvern had last seen her. She was not beautiful — had no pretensions to beauty — but there were a soul-fraught intellectual expression in her countenance and a winning softness in her manner, which far outstrip the dazzling blaze of the diamonds and pearls, and roses and lilies, which dazzle and confound, and take the heart by storm. Maria Burford was charming for her gentleness; but it was clear that time alone could develope, to their full extent, the attractions of her mind, and the powers of her understanding.

The little flurry of a new arrival — the genuine pleasure of a meeting with her brother — the natural agitation at the appearance of one so long a stranger — a lord too —

and the lord to whom that brother was so much attached, from whom he had received such kindness, and to whom, as she felt most of all, his intimacy had been so beneficial — these flushed a cheek by nature pale, and palpitated a bosom pure and at rest from every fiercer passion, and gave animation to the placid countenance of the affectionate sister and the dutiful daughter, and almost brought a tear into the eyes of the young nobleman, whose heart ached for such comforts and such a home, as Lionsden did not in fact afford.

Burford had apprised his mother of their intended arrival at Paris, so that the surprise consisted only in the appearance of Lord Malvern, who apologised for the intrusion; the necessity of doing which struck him forcibly, when he sensibly felt that, although Burford had scouted the idea of his not accompanying him, his presence *did* seem to put a restraint upon the intercourse between the family party.

"Mrs. Burford," said Lord Malvern, "I was so anxious to pay my respects to you this evening, that I have broken in upon your charming retirement, when I am quite sure you could have best spared me. To-morrow you shall have Burford all to yourselves; if he will trust me, I will find myself in recreation through the day and evening, and you shall enjoy at least twelve hours of unreserved *cause*."

"You are very, very good," said Mrs. Burford; "indeed, Lord Malvern, the kindness of Lord Snowdon to my son has been so noble, so unbounded, that really I have no words adequate to express my feelings upon the subject. I did at one time intend to write to him myself, but as I conclude his whole time is occupied in matrimonial affairs, I felt that I should be worrying and intruding, and so I have abandoned the design."

"Yes," said Lord Malvern, recollecting where he was — the plain, quiet comfort that he saw — the unruffled affection which seemed to exist between the different branches of the family with which he was at the moment domesticated; and recollecting, too, what were the feelings, the hopes — blighted, it is true — of his exemplary friend —

"yes, and I sincerely wish that my father were not so engaged."

"I am sure," said Mrs. Burford, "my prayers will be most sincerely offered up for a happy result; but I confess that in such unequal matches, I always have my doubts and fears."

"There is not so much inequality," said Lord Malvern.

"Do you think not, my lord?" asked the lady. "A bride of nineteen or twenty, and a husband of nearly sixty?"

"Sixty!" exclaimed Lord Malvern, "Lord Elmsdale is not more than thirty."

"No," said Mrs. Burford, "I am sure he is not; but am not speaking of Lady Hester's marriage — I mean Lord Snowdon's marriage."

"Ah!" said Lord Malvern, "his marriage would be indeed a strange affair."

"Strange!" said Mrs. Burford; "why, my lord, of course — have I said any thing odd? you both look so wildly — of course — why you are going to London to attend it!"

"What, my dear mother!" said Burford.

"Lord Snowdon's marriage!" said Maria, laying down the work upon which she was notably employed.

"My father's marriage!" exclaimed Lord Malvern. "My dear madam, are you in earnest?"

"Positively!" said Mrs. Burford; "there is no doubt whatever about it: it is announced in all the London papers as a thing to happen immediately."

"And who," faltered Lord Malvern, "is the lady?"

"Miss Oldham," said Mrs. Burford, "the only daughter of Lady Katharine Oldham."

The effect of this answer was awful. Lord Malvern uttered a faint stifled shriek, and fell as if shot through the heart, to all appearance dead, from his chair.

"My dearest mother," said Burford, "what have you done? — what is it? — is it so? — are you sure it is?"

"Positive," said Maria; "we had a letter only two days ago, detailing the whole thing."

Burford shook his head, as indicative of his fear of con-

sequences, and lifted poor Lord Malvern to the sofa, who still remained senseless. A servant was immediately despatched for a physician, and in the mean time, Burford used all the means immediately within reach, to restore the distressed patient.

French physicians are, if possible, worse guessers than English ones — for, after all, guess-work it is — and the excellent gentleman who arrived, having in his mind an extremely strong prejudice in favour of gentle remedies, such as tisane and other matters little used in British practice, was extremely puzzled by the appearance of his patient. Upon one point he was very suddenly resolved, and that for a reason evident to the meanest capacity — milord must not be moved ; — every inch he went towards his own hotel, he would go further away from his doctor. A bed must be procured for him on the spot — the doctor must attend him all night ; and when the learned person was informed that the fit, or whatever it was, had been caused by the abrupt communication of a piece of unexpected intelligence, he gravely pronounced it as his opinion, that mind had a great deal to do with it, and that nothing should be done calculated in the slightest degree to agitate or irritate his lordship.

In such a dilemma there was no alternative, and a bed was immediately prepared in Mrs. Burford's "quiet residence," to which poor Lord Malvern, already fatigued by his journey, excited by the wine he had drank, and acted upon forcibly enough by the calm and happy appearance of Burford's family, and now laid prostrate by a double blow of fate, was carried by his tutor and the doctor, a messenger having been despatched to the hotel for his servant, and with an announcement that neither his lordship nor Mr. Burford would return that night.

Lord Malvern remained for some time silent, and apparently unconscious of any thing that was passing around him. The reader may easily appreciate the state of poor Mrs. Burford's mind, conscious as she was of having been the innocent cause of an attack which, in its appearance and character, was of a very frightful nature.

"Burford," said the patient, after more than two hours' silence, "are you near me?"

"Yes, my dear friend, at your side," said Burford.

"Is all this a dream? — what has happened? — did I fall down? — was I asleep? — where am I? — did I hear aright? — my father to be married — to be married to Elizabeth Oldham—is that it?—is it true?—is it all real?"

"You must not talk," said Burford; "calm yourself to-night, dear Malvern; — you are in my mother's house — I hope you will rest — in the morning we can speak more of these matters."

"Morning!" said Lord Malvern, "what is it o'clock now? — late? — I hope so — I hope very late — I want to write to my father. I'll not go, Burford — he may sell my sister, whom I love — he may buy my Elizabeth, whom I adore; but I'll not be there — I'll have no hand in the bargains — nor shall you, Burford — promise me?"

"Be calm," said Burford, "I will do nothing but what you wish me to do; you shall not go to London — at all events you must rest."

"Here — here," said Lord Malvern; "this is indeed a place of rest; here there are quiet, and contentment, and love, and duty, and affection — but not for *me* — no — Burford, my fate is decided — I am doomed — my father may marry — but to marry *her* — oh! I *cannot* believe it."

"It may be a false report," said Burford.

"It must be," said Lord Malvern, "it must be — she *did* love *me*, and can she marry with my father? — impossible! But, Burford, my dear fellow, hear me — all this must be wretchedly annoying and inconvenient to your excellent mother and sister. I am well enough to go home — let me dress — I can return to the hotel."

"My dear Malvern," said Burford, "my mother is here herself to tell you that you neither worry nor inconvenience her, except as your illness naturally pains her."

"My dear madam," said Lord Malvern, sitting up in bed and eagerly catching her hand, "tell me — are you sure — quite sure — I now recollect all — I have got my senses — I know what I talk of, and of what you were talking before I fell — I know I fell — yes, I recollect that — tell

me, dearest Mrs. Burford, are you quite sure that my father's intended wife is Elizabeth Oldham?"

Burford shook his head, as a sign to his mother not to confirm the report by any unquestionable authority, thinking it better to leave something like hope for his friend to exist upon.

"Ah! Burford," said his lordship, seeing the signal, "I am aware it is so; it is vain to try to buoy me up. Well! That he should marry is not much, but that he should marry *her*, is very much indeed. No, no England for us, Burford. Poor Hester, what can I say to her? What can we, any of us, say to her? Mrs. Burford, you know my sister — my excellent, good, kind sister? You have heard Charles speak of her?"

"I have seen her ladyship," said Mrs. Burford; "don't you recollect, my lord, when we were staying at Lionsden?"

"To be sure, to be sure," answered Lord Malvern; "I am dreaming still — would it were all a dream. I hate that Elmsdale — he will make my sister wretched — she does not love him — no, no — she does not."

"Pray, pray, be calm," said Burford, who dreaded some exclamation on the part of the suffering young man, which might disclose to his mother the extent of his own presumption, in daring to permit his heart to admit a preference, which it was impossible for it to exclude.

"I will," said Lord Malvern. "I must write to my father to-morrow. Shall I sleep? — can I rest? — give me something to quiet me; and yet if I sleep, I shall dream of it all again."

The physician had anticipated Lord Malvern's wishes; and although by no means desirous of "exhibiting" opiates in a case of such a physical appearance, he had prepared a soothing draught, which Lord Malvern swallowed, and shortly after the arrival of his servant from the hotel (to whom the adjoining room was appropriated) the unhappy heir of thousands sank into a calm and gentle slumber.

When Burford quitted the room, he gave strict injunctions to the valet to come to him the moment his lord waked, and directed him, if he found himself, as it was natural he might after a long day's journey, desirous of

sleep, to call him, in order that he might take his place in watching the couch of the unfortunate young nobleman; for, much as Burford was attached to him for his own good qualities, his kindness, his talents, and for the affection of friendship, which always is reciprocated, the fact that he was Lady Hester's brother, nay, even that there was a similarity in their manners sufficient always to recall her to his mind, when he was present, made the accidental inmate of his mother's house an object of the deepest interest in his eyes.

He slept well through the night: youth, fatigue, and a fine constitution, operated against the mental oppression; and when his friend went to him in the morning, he found him very much better, and, to his delight, perfectly calm, although perfectly determined on the course which he should pursue.

"The storm is over," said Lord Malvern: "it has passed away; but the wrecks remain in evidence of its ravages. I have resolved upon the line I shall take, open to your opinion and advice. To my father I owe every thing — duty, respect, obedience. I have not a word to say in opposition to his marriage. I will combine with him in the arrangements which I know will be necessary upon the occasion. I will do my duty, Burford, rigidly, faithfully, and filially; but I will not, because I cannot, witness the blight of my own hopes of happiness, and therefore I will not go to England."

"Upon matters of feeling, my dear lord," said Burford, "I am the last man in the world to interfere with you. I have never found it necessary to do so, because Providence has gifted you with a mind and heart that need no human correction. You are quite justified in the course you propose."

"It would be hypocrisy, my dear Burford," said Lord Malvern, "if I were to profane the church by my presence at such a ceremony; and it is clear to me, that if I go to poor Hester's marriage, I must remain for the other. I will see neither. I shall write to her when I write to my father — that must be done to-day — my head is clear, my pulse quiet, and I am equal to the task. If I did not fear

that I should inconvenience your kind mother, I would give the world to remain here so long as we stay in Paris, or if not here actually, in some house close by — depend upon it, Burford, there is in the domestic character of an English-woman a charm, a riveting charm, for which no foreign flippancy can compensate. Upon the face of the earth, there exists no such being as the well-educated, well-regulated woman of our native land. The brief hour which I passed here yesterday evening before my 'exhibition,' had in it, to me, something so soothing, so delightful, that I want words to describe it. I feel at home — I feel my heart at home, Burford; and if I may stay amongst you, on this day of shipwrecked expectations, I am sure I shall recover my peace of mind sooner than by any violent effort at change or movement."

"My mother will be too happy," said Burford.

"Did not you think," continued Lord Malvern, "that Elizabeth Oldham was attached to *me?* how gentle, how kind, how amiable, how playful, and ingenuous she was."

"I admit," said Burford, "that I did think so; but you see she has deceived us, for she is going to be married to another, and that other, one, whom if she ever did reciprocate your feelings, would be the last man on earth with whom she would unite herself."

"The wisest thing, I suppose," said Lord Malvern, "is to reconcile myself to the loss of her with the best possible grace."

"Indeed I think so," said Burford: "a young lady, who gives so very unequivocal a sign of forgetfulness as that of marrying another man, does not, as it appears to me, deserve any particular sorrow for her loss."

"Hester," said Lord Malvern, "is going to marry Lord Elmsdale."

"Yes!" said Burford.

"May not she be forced into that marriage?" asked Lord Malvern.

"Forgive me, Malvern," said Burford; "on that subject, let me implore you, never speak!"

"Will you go now," said Lord Malvern, "and be the bearer of my letter to my father, and marry her to Elmsdale?"

"Do you wish it?"

"Not I — not I!" replied the young lord; "no! I merely wished to test your theory by practice. I dare not tell her what you have confided to me, because I fear it is now too late; else, what tie have I to my father? Nature demands my duty — he shall have it! I will be all obedience where his personal happiness is concerned; I will sacrifice any thing — every thing! But, as for myself or my sister, he has himself broken the ties which bound us to him; and, as I feel that it is not in my nature to dissemble, so I shall at once declare open war, and refuse to sanction either marriage, by any thing like a participation in its ceremonial."

"I have already said, Lord Malvern," said Burford, "that, with matters of feeling, I am quite sure I have no right to interfere. The obligations under which Lord Snowdon has laid me are great, and the gratitude they demand commensurate; but, in this instance, I certainly so far agree with you, that if a question should arise upon the point, I should have no hesitation in resigning the preferment to which his lordship has just appointed me, together with the charge which he has confided to me in your person."

"There is one thing," said Lord Malvern, "which you cannot resign, and which he never can take from you; and that is the honorary office — if so it may be considered — of *my* friend: *that*, you must remain, so long as we live, unless I have a permanent return of my last night's complaint."

"You are too kind, Malvern," replied Burford.

"I only wish — to my very heart I wish it! — more now than ever!" said — almost sobbed — Lord Malvern, "that we were connected by a nearer tie! My poor sister has fortune enough of her own to have made you both happy; and if that had not been sufficient, I — but no matter — I wish I had known all this before! My first business must be to write to my father: perhaps the report is not true; however, upon that head, I shall soon be satisfied. I will write to Hester — yes, to both! — and yet, what can I say to her, poor girl? — perhaps *she* like

her friend, is altered — changed in her nature and character! No — I am sure she never could like Elmsdale, under any circumstances!"

"I think," said Burford, "that an immediate appeal to Lord Snowdon is the straight course; — ascertain from himself the accuracy of the rumour. As you say, in days when men get money by spreading falsehoods one day, in order that they may get more by contradicting them the next, it is impossible to calculate with any certainty upon the *undoubted* authority quoted for such histories."

"Your counsel shall be obeyed," said Lord Malvern; "and while I am writing — I feel equal to the task — do you endeavour to make some arrangement so as not to inconvenience your mother and sister, that may place us here, or hereabouts, for some time to come. I repeat to you, that I am sure nothing is so likely to restore my health, bodily and mental, as the repose which the society of a quiet English family will afford me."

"Forgive me, Malvern," said Burford, "and, above all, acquit me of any intention of thwarting your most reasonable inclinations, upon the score of inconvenience to my mother and sister; but, is it not best to consider, in the first instance, whether Lord Snowdon might approve of such a change in your intentions?"

"Lord Snowdon," said Lord Malvern, "as I have already declared, has a right to my obedience, where his personal happiness is concerned: I have said so — I feel so — but where it is not, and where the exertion of my will cannot interfere with *his* movements, I consider myself at liberty to consult my own feelings. I am now past four-and-twenty years of age, with every right to be master of my own actions, and ——"

"And, therefore, capable of directing your course through the world, my lord," said Burford, "without my guidance."

"So I *may* be," replied Lord Malvern, "but not without your society. I repeat, you may cease to be my tutor; but the moment you choose to disavow that character, I claim you for my friend. You will not refuse me the boon I request?"

"I am too proud of such a testimonial of your good opinion," said Burford; "all I meant to ask was—would not your rest and residence here with me and my family give an appearance to Lord Snowdon that we had leagued together in a hostile alliance against him?"

"If you think that possible," said Lord Malvern, "and believe that such an appearance would be injurious to yourself, I will relinquish my plan; but I am certain that active movements and extended excursions are at present ill suited to my health or spirits. I should prefer remaining where I am, to moving; and as far as the most distinct declaration to my father of my purpose, uninfluenced by you, and indeed adopted in opposition to your wishes, may serve to set your mind at rest upon that point, it shall be made in the letter which I am about to write to him. At all events I must remain here for some time, in order to be within reach of his man of business, with whom it will be necessary I should have a personal communication previous to the final adjustment of his marriage."

"I can have no objection, my dear lord," said Burford, "to the arrangement you suggest; for to *me* the additional society of my mother and sister must naturally be most agreeable. Assure yourself that my motives were ——"

"The best, my dear Burford, I know," interrupted his lordship; "but you must allow me again to remind you, that I am of an age to judge for myself; and that, however anxious I may now and ever shall be to avail myself of your opinions and suggestions, I must act in the way which I consider most conducive to my happiness, if happiness yet remain in store for me. My father has set me the example; he has formed a new connexion, and begins life again; mine is indeed a first start, but I feel I have now nobody's inclination to consult but my own; and so, my dear fellow, as I am resolved to stay quietly where I am, all I have to inquire is, whether your excellent mother will permit me to remain her visiter during my *séjour*, or whether it will be more agreeable that I should secure a separate residence?"

"I have no doubt of my mother's answer," said Burford; "although I think your becoming an inmate of our house at the moment of a declared hostility with the marquess will strike her at first, as it struck me, as rather imprudent on your part, and extremely indelicate on ours."

"I repeat, Burford," said Lord Malvern, "that I will explain all *that* to Lord Snowdon, and in such a manner that not a shadow of doubt shall be cast upon your honour and candour, or upon those of any part of your family. Have I not been staying in your mother's house in England? Have I not been accustomed to visit her periodically during the whole of our acquaintance? Nothing can be more simple or natural — From the circumstances to which my exhibition of last night so painfully attracted your attention, I have been your guest for the last fourteen or fifteen hours, *malgré moi;* let me continue so, for as many days, or weeks, if you please, with my own concurrence."

"I can say nothing more, my lord," replied Burford. "Let Lord Snowdon think what he may, I am conscious that I have done nothing which ought to incur displeasure on his part, or evince ingratitude on mine. It is true I am bound to him by favours and obligations conferred on me: but to you I am equally bound by even stronger ties. I will go to my mother, and discuss the point with *her*."

Mrs. Burford, the mother of our friend, the *ci-devant* tutor, was an extremely clever, well-informed woman. Her view of the case which her son submitted to her perfectly coincided with his: she anticipated, in a moment, not only what Lord Snowdon might think of such an arrangement, but what the world would say of it; she went even farther in her speculations than her son had gone, and looked to ultimate results at which his thoughts had never glanced.

"My dear son," said Mrs. Burford, "I think it would be ruinous to us all. The world would naturally say that we had taken advantage of a difference between the father and son, to secure the latter to ourselves; and this is, in my mind, an objection which ought to be fatal to such a scheme. Lord Malvern has received a shock which is cal-

culated to drive him into some act of indiscretion, by which he may fancy he shall revenge the inconstancy and heartlessness of Miss Oldham. Now — don't imagine that I speak fondly or foolishly in what I am going to say — Maria is, even to others' eyes, beside those of her parent, a most prepossessing person. She is accomplished and clever. If Lord Malvern continue here, he will have hourly opportunities of seeing her in the fulfilment of all her duties, adding, by her talents and conversation, much to the stock of our general comfort and happiness. I know enough of the world to know with what readiness the wounded heart reposes itself in fancied security. Lord Malvern speaks highly of our little home; he tells you that he feels happy and comfortable in the participation with ourselves in the quiet amusements of an humble family. This very admission is one of my strongest reasons for opposing the plan. Habitual association renders the objects constantly with us at length positively necessary to our existence. Suppose this should occur? imagine that Lord Malvern were to feel thus, with regard to your poor sister; is it not more than probable that she would, without reflecting upon the difference of their stations in life — never thought of in such communings — reciprocate the feelings which he might inspire? See, Charles, what mischief we should be preparing for ourselves. If such were to be the case, and Lord Malvern, acting under the impulse of mingled love and revenge, were to marry my child, what would the world say, but that we had contrived the scheme — had laid the snare, and had succeeded in carrying our point?"

"I see all this," said Burford; "you have made out a strong case — but Maria ——"

"I am not vain enough of her," said Mrs. Burford, "to attribute a power of conquest to her qualities, either personal or mental; but in considering her happiness, I see a double danger in the affair. Look on the other side of the picture. Lord Malvern is all that is amiable, agreeable, and attractive. Might not she, poor girl, fall a victim to feelings that never might be requited? I am satisfied that she has sufficient good sense to know that a marriage between a child of mine and a child of Lord Snowdon's

would be, without the violation of every tie that binds his family together, impossible; and her well-regulated mind would keep in check any feeling that ——"

"My dear mother," said Burford, "you must not trust to that; let us talk of something else. I see the propriety of your objections. Say no more. The difficulty I find, is in the nature of the excuse which I can make to Malvern, who has so compietely fixed his heart upon his new plan, that I fear the consequences of its sudden overthrow."

"If that is your feeling," said Mrs. Burford, "I have a proposition which, I think, will answer our purpose. Tell him that I am delighted to receive him, that I am proud of his preference, and that we will do all we can to make him comfortable. Let the arrangement continue for a few days. I have no tie to Paris. At the end of whatever period we may fix, I will receive a letter from England requiring my immediate presence in London. Maria and I will then take our departure, and so conclude the affair in one of two satisfactory ways. We shall leave him free and unfettered; and if he remain with you here, my duty to *him* and my child will have been done; and if, after our departure, he choose to quit Paris, you will resume your tour without an imputation of having aided or abetted in what nothing would persuade the world was not the plan 'of a worldly, designing parent."

This female stratagem met with Burford's approval. It saved him from the refusal, which would have had a strange appearance, and might have excited some suspicions of its real cause in Lord Malvern's mind, while it maintained the honour and independence of his relations. The only part of the conversation with his parent which had wounded him, was her reference to the utter impossibility of an union between a child of hers, and one of Lord Snowdon's. Upon that point he already knew Lord Malvern's opinion, which in fact made the case more difficult and delicate, the moment his mother had drawn his attention to a point which had never before come under his consideration.

The plan proposed was speedily put into execution; and Burford, "doing a great right" by "doing a little wrong," returned to his expectant friend with his mother's message,

which his lordship received with the most unequivocal expressions of gratitude and pleasure. He was still weak and faint, and had evidently exhausted himself by writing the promised letters to his father and sister. They were concluded: *that* to Lady Hester was sealed; that to Lord Snowdon he read to Burford, having written it in the hope that his proposition to his mother would be favourably received, and having, in explaining his resolution to remain where he was, distinctly and clearly stated the determination to have been his own, formed and persisted in, without the suggestion, in the first instance, and in opposition, in the second, to the wishes of his "friend" Burford—the word friend being underscored, in order practically to announce to Lord Snowdon the change which he had made in the relation existing between himself and his *ci-devant* tutor.

These letters, when completed, were despatched for England; and with them went a third, written by the careful mother of the "friend," in which was contained the necessary directions for carrying on the plot of removing herself and her daughter from the very delicate position in which they had been placed by the self-invitation of her noble guest.

It is necessary the reader should be taken to London before these letters reach it, for sundry reasons, the which he will be permitted to know in the course of the next chapter.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

CHAPTER VIII.

In Grosvenor Square, things were rapidly drawing to a crisis. Madame Maradan Carsan had already sent home a great portion of the *trousseau*. Already had "the four dozen of every thing," the prescribed twelve morning dresses, the ordained six evening dresses, and the well-stored *sachet*, made their appearance. Acceptances of their invitations had been received from all the guests; the "elegant travelling carriage," of which the town was soon to read in the Morning Post, had received the last finishing touch; and the marquess himself had inspected the many-quartered shield, which Hobson's best of artists had painted and emblazoned with the greatest skill and the nicest accuracy.

Lord Snowdon had received a brief and hasty answer from Lord Malvern to the letter, which, as we know, caught him at Tours; in which the obedient son announced his intention of being in London as soon as possible, giving that as the very strongest reason for saying little else in writing. The days were calculated by the marquess with an astrological carefulness, so that his son might arrive just at the moment when he was surrounded by his new connexions; and the Oldhams, and Lord Elmsdale, together with one or two cousins of the family, were invited to dinner on the particular Tuesday on which his dear "Malvern" was to reach home; and then there was, of course, to be a scene, a little "effect." And if it had all happened as his lordship intended, and Lord Malvern had on a sudden been introduced to Elizabeth as his future mother-in-law, it is extremely probable that the "effect"

would have been much more striking than even the marquess himself anticipitated.

This great design, however, was destined, like most of the noble marquess's contrivances, to fail; for on the morning of this "to have been" auspicious day, arrived the two letters from Paris, at the sealing and despatching of which the reader has been present.

To attempt a description of the consternation and rage of Lord Snowdon would be vain — to paint the wretchedness of Lady Hester equally so — upon the receipt of these missives. Lord Malvern's address to his father was moderate and temperate, but firm and determined. He expressed to him the same sentiments as those which he had avowed to Burford, announced his perfect readiness to enter into every arrangement calculated to secure his father's happiness, at the same time venturing a doubt of its attainment by the particular measure he proposed to adopt; leaving the real cause of his apprehension, the previous attachment of Miss Oldham to himself, of course wholly out of sight. This part of the communication, however, puzzled his noble parent more than any other. His son, although he did not object generally to the principle of his second marriage, seemed to dwell with great emphasis upon the unfortuate circumstance of his choice of that particular person.

This was a mystery to the marquess: he could not comprehend why the grand-daughter of an earl, and of one of the most ancient families, amiable, handsome, and accomplished, could be any thing but a desirable match, if the principle of his marrying again were once admitted. Lord Malvern's refusal to participate in any of the proceedings connected with the affair made him furious; but more furious was he, if possible, at his refusal to be present at his sister's nuptials: it would infallibly proclaim to the world that a difference existed in the family, that the Plinlimmons were subject to the frailties of humanity, and that their domestic felicity was not perfect. Besides, what had the one event to do with the other? or why, with the readiness which he expressed to meet his views in every other way, should his son take that step, which, most of

all, must mark to society a pointed and personal dislike and disrespect for the particular individual of his father's choice?

Of Lord Malvern's opinion of Lord Elmsdale, Lord Snowdon was previously aware. He knew that he did not particularly like him: but nobody could dislike him sufficiently to put an indignity upon him, or treat him with neglect, and even contempt; all of which the marquess considered his son to do by declining to sanction his union with his sister, and by neglecting, after having come to such a determination, even to write an ordinarily civil and congratulatory letter to him upon the occasion of his becoming so nearly connected with the family. But most of all was the marquess angry, for that all these circumstances combined produced the entire discomfiture of his designs for the "effect" of the day, and reduced him to the painful necessity of announcing to his connections in full divan the resolution of his dutiful and obedient son (the most exemplary child upon earth except his sister) not to obey his father's wishes, or grace with his countenance and presence the consummation of the family felicity.

Lady Hester read her brother's letter hastily and tremblingly, for she dreaded the sudden appearance of her noble sire, and perhaps his command to show him the epistle. His inquiries about Elizabeth were many and minute. His indignation at all the circumstances connected with the affair was expressed in no gentle terms. He implored Lady Hester to write to him, and tell him all she could collect of Miss Oldham's real feelings and views, and her own genuine opinion with regard to herself and the position in which she was placed. He entreated her to be candid, expressed an implied disinclination towards Lord Elmsdale, and requested her, if she felt as he apprehended she did, even at the late period which had arrived, to resist the completion of the arrangement, using to her the same justification for rebellion against their father as he had adopted in his conversation with Burford, and avowing it as a principle which he would vindicate and maintain at all hazards, that the forcing of hearts into worldly marriages was a crime worse in its character than murder.

He wrote, as may be imagined, under highly excited feelings; and, irritated out of his prudence, gave utterance to ultra-violent sentiments, which startled the agonised Lady Hester, who, while she dreaded the intemperance which characterised his letter, felt what deadly truth his words conveyed. All that could console her in her hapless case was the fact that Burford was not to perform the ceremony; and this announcement Lord Malvern made to his sister in language which filled her with fear and wonder —it was all too late for hope.

"By my determination," wrote Lord Malvern, "my friend, my excellent friend, Burford, escapes the task of uniting you to Lord Elmsdale. With his feelings for all of us, and with a conviction of the results of this match entirely agreeing with mine, what a duty it would have been for him to perform. If I know any thing of your real feelings, the circumstance would have been equally painful to you. As far as I am concerned, I should have rejoiced if that worthy, honourable fellow had occupied a very different position, relatively to my sister, in such a ceremonial. What a misfortune it is that nature is so seldom permitted to assert her claims! Do not think, dearest Hester, that I mean to reproach you with want of moral courage or firmness in a just cause; but if I understand your heart, and can judge with any fairness of your inclinations, you ought peremptorily to have refused the offer of your intended husband. This is my own unbiassed opinion; for you may be sure that upon this particular subject I could not ask Burford's opinion, nor could he give one, with the hope of my allowing him any credit for impartiality."

This part of her brother's letter Lady Hester read and re-read — it seemed to her full of danger, full of mystery —yet it sounded sweetly to her ears. Was it possible that Lord Malvern really was aware of her affection for Burford? — "She had never told her love." Did he mean to say, that if she had refused Lord Elmsdale and succeeded in frustrating the match, that he would have espoused her cause? or did he go the length of encouraging her to hope that, if she had been sufficiently resolute in that particular,

he would have justified and protected her in marrying the last man on earth with whom his father would have sanctioned her union?

That he was aware of the circumstances in which she was placed seemed certain; and yet, where was the use, where the advantage of speculating upon such visionary fancies? In a few days more, she would be Lady Elmsdale. Yes, before it was possible for Alfred to receive her letter, and return an answer. Why had he touched upon the subject *then?* Why had he not alluded to it earlier? *We* know why he had not, because we know the period at which he first became acquainted with Burford's sentiments. She, poor soul, did not. And it is scarcely possible to describe the state of mind into which she was thrown, by what almost appeared the cruelty of her devoted brother.

Lady Hester felt, however, that she had a duty to perform which must be done immediately. She resolved, therefore, to exclude all visiters, until she had answered the letter which had so dreadfully excited and so seriously agitated her. This answer shall presently be submitted to the reader, as conveying an accurate and authentic state of the family circle on the eve of the two events, which were destined to increase its sphere and shake it to its centre.

Meanwhile, Lord Snowdon, after considering and cogitating, for a long time, as to the best method of concealing his anger and disappointment, decided upon the course he should pursue. It so happened, that he never inquired whether Lady Hester had received any letter from her brother, and that it never struck him as probable that she had. The junior branches of his house —as the underbred misses of the suburban boarding-schools are taught never to speak till they are spoken to, or permitted to ask for what they want till they are asked to have it—were trained to silent obedience: so that as it did not occur to Lord Snowdon that his son had written to any body except himself, he made no inquiry; and upon the principle of the establishment, when Lady Hester met her father, she of course, did not mention the circumstance to *him*, gladly

availing herself of his silence to keep to herself a communication, which, if he had desired to see it, she could not have refused to show him, and which, if he had seen it, would have set the smouldering embers of his passion into a blaze.

As it was, Lady Hester's surprise and pleasure — if pleasure she could just then feel at any thing — were by no means small, when she perceived her magnificent parent stalk into the drawing-room, with an air of graceful tranquillity and unruffled dignity. No mark of anger or disappointment was on his brow. All seemed smooth and calm. She yet dreaded that the appearance might be deceitful — if it were so, the *plating* was extremely thick, for he entered into general conversation about the nothings of the day with his daughter and Miss Everingham, and concluded the interview, by a simple inquiry at what time Lady Hester had ordered the carriage.

It was after this — to Lady Hester — astonishing scene, that she concluded and despatched her letter to Paris. Lord Snowdon had written also. But he had a friend in the Foreign Office, and as he did not at all dislike being seen in the neighbourhood of that admirably conducted department, he ordered his carriage, drove to the door, visited his friend, a "convenient" subordinate, and remained to waste at least half an hour of the public time, in a common-place dialogue with the highly honoured functionary, merely for the chance of having it announced by the Court Newsman in the next day's paper, that "yesterday the Marquess of Snowdon transacted business at the Foreign Office." Half the official visits so recorded have their origin in matters of about as much importance.

Lady Hester's despatch went by the ordinary post, and was thus written: —

"Grosvenor Square, —— -.——

"Dearest Malvern,

"What I am to say in answer to your long and deeply-interesting letter, I know not — I have so much to tell you, and so little time or space for explanations. I can entirely enter into your feelings about

Elizabeth. Your astonishment at the intelligence I can easily imagine — it is altogether a dreadful affair, and I am sure, and so is Anne, must end ill. I speak now really and truly without any of that prejudice, which you may very naturally suppose I might have against such a marriage. But I must tell you, that the very cause of our apprehensions for my father's happiness ought to relieve you of those regrets, which the sudden disappointment of your hopes about Elizabeth might otherwise have caused you.

" I have had several conversations with her — if conversations they may be called — in which, not by her confessions, not even by her words, but by her manner, and the general tenor of her conduct, I have convinced myself, that the pleasure she appeared to feel in your society was all assumed. She was then too young to play a part without entering into something like its real feeling, but the last few months have strongly and strangely developed her character and matured her principles, if principles they may be called.

" To her advancement in life, or to mine, I must attribute the entire alteration of my views and opinions concerning her: either she was too young *then* to be so heartless as she is *now*, or I was too young to perceive her faults. I have spoken to her of you — a somewhat delicate subject as I felt it; but her replies convinced me that I had nothing to fear in alluding to the subject, and that she either never felt that regard for you, which her apparently artless and affectionate manner induced us to think she did, or that something has occurred to obliterate the recollection of those days, and induce her voluntarily to enter our house in a very different position from that which she had, at that period, assigned her.

" She has lived latterly much with foreigners: her air and manner are bold and forward; she talks fast and loudly, even to my father, whom she has begun to call 'Dear.' Of her influence over him and its extent, you will best judge by knowing that he not only endures this gentle familiarity, but evidently is pleased with it. It must be a very powerful feeling of devotion on his part,

which could induce him to bear so rapid a [illegible]wards equality in the daughter, combined with the incessant nonsensical jargon of the mother, who, to me, is of all odious people in the world the most detestable.

"They have in their family a pet man — a Mr. Frederick Richardson, whom they think perfection. He is constantly deferred to, upon every occasion; and being quartered at Hampton Court, finds their house at Richmond an agreeable *séjour* when he is not engaged by duty. I think papa hates him. He began by being extremely courteous to him; but Mr. Richardson mistook his condescension for good fellowship, and begins now to play with the lion; I am quite sure that some day he will get a pat which he will remember for the rest of his life. He is extremely forward, and I think vulgar; he calls Elizabeth by her Christian name, and *pooh poohs* my lady Katharine with the most unqualified impudence. In fact, I see nothing but misery for my poor father in the connection; but, as far as you are concerned, I see — and since the misery must be inflicted *malgré nous*, it is a great consolation — that your happiness with such a girl as she has become would have been equally problematical; therefore, dear Malvern, accept the only balm I can afford, if it be balm to a heart that once has loved, to find it had been betrayed.

"You [illegible]ect me to say something of myself. Had you been [illegible] I might have ventured upon the refusal you now too late advise; and yet, to have lived under the ban of a father's curse — and it would inevitably have fallen on me — I could not endure. I dare not at this period permit myself to answer that part of your letter which relates to Lord Elmsdale. In a few days he will be my husband; and, by the blessing of that Providence upon which I have from my earliest youth implicitly relied, I will be the obedient, dutiful, and affectionate wife, that I shall solemnly pledge myself to be. I must seem an ungrateful girl even in making this profession; for when I examine my heart, I can find no fault with Elmsdale: every body speaks well of him; he is amiable, and, as far as I know, good — would that he had made choice of some one who could better appreciate his estimable qualities.

certainly hoped, in marriage, for something more congenial with my own disposition — but, dearest Malvern, trust your devoted sister she will fulfil her duty faithfully, and time may ripen esteem and gratitude into a warmer feeling.

" You speak of Mr. Burford's escape from the perform ance of the marriage ceremony as very agreeable to *him ;* to me the substitution of any other clergyman is a most important relief, because he is associated in my mind with yourself — so intimately connected in my recollection with all those scenes, which, least of all, I should wish to be recalled to my memory at the awful moment which must now so shortly arrive ; that it would indeed have added, painfully and considerably, to the difficulty of my position, in a degree that I cannot describe even to you. Make my best, my kindest remembrances to him, as *your* friend. I noticed the emphasis, and rejoiced to see it. As *your* friend, he must always be dear to me ; and although, after a few short days have passed, I may not honourably avow an interest for any, but one, I am yet free to assure him of my constant regard, and a recollection, through life, of the kindness and attention I have ever received from him, and of that care and friendship for *you,* which I so thankfully feel and you so justly appreciate.

" I was waiting to close this, until I had seen my father, and heard his opinion and determination upon your letter. He has been in the drawing-room with Anne and myself, has talked on ordinary subjects, but never uttered one syllable either about you or your communication. How he means to act of course I cannot imagine. A great family party is invited here, to-day, to meet and receive you, and I am most anxious to know what he will do. It has been a great relief to me that he never inquired whether I had heard from you ; nor do I know whether you wrote to Elmsdale — he expected that you would have done so : I cannot say I did — if I can write before *the* day I will.

" You of course have heard of the failure of our *fête* at Lionsden — it was a signal discomfiture. But it is very curious — I hear that my father has been a good deal engaged in politics since our return to town — of course not

a word from himself; but Lady Ticehurst — one of the cleverest and most agreeable women I ever met with, and who knows more of what is going on than any body in London — tells me, that he has actually got the promise of the governor-generalship of India. Do not for the world allude to this in any way — it may not be true; but he has dined with the minister since our arrival in London, and I have seen two or three official men at dinner here, whose faces I never saw in our house before. If it should be so, Elizabeth will become an oriental queen; which I think is as likely to turn such a head as hers, as any thing one can well imagine.

"Think of me, pray for me, dearest Malvern: to have had you here would have been a great comfort — and yet — no — I am sure it is best as it is. I am able to moderate my feelings of disinclination to this marriage, by the recollection of what is so soon to succeed it, in the family arrangements; to have Elizabeth Oldham as she is, Marchioness of Snowdon, would be unbearable. Poor Anne Everingham is more wretched than any body else at her approaching elevation. Anne never, till the present moment, entirely relinquished the idea that she had a powerful interest with the marquess, and sometimes, as I fancy, entertained a distant idea of becoming my mother-in-law herself. She knows no bounds in declaiming against the intended marchioness, and denounces her as the most inveterate flirt, and detestable coquet; and to see the expression of her countenance when Elizabeth calls papa 'Dear,' would make any body even more wretched than myself smile through her grief.

"Once more, adieu, dear Malvern; remember I write in great haste — in great fear — in great grief — and in the strictest confidence. Let me know of your speedy recovery — let me at least hear that you are well and happy; — cast away all thought of the heartless conqueror of your young heart, and seek for some object worthy of you: if you doubt, be guided by Mr. Burford's taste and judgment, and you cannot do wrong. Farewell — farewell.

"Affectionately yours,

"Hester Plinlimmon."

This letter, sealed, addressed, and despatched, the fair writer felt her mind greatly relieved. She dare not read what she had written. The part which referred to Burford terrified her; she could not bear to pass over his much-loved name in utter silence — she could not endure eternally to sever the tie which bound her to him, without one word of "adieu:" and yet she feared that she had permitted herself to express her feelings more warmly than was consistent with her present character. Should she re-read it? — should she re-write it? — No — let it go — it was the genuine outpouring of a warm and affectionate heart, whose impulses she could safely trust, while under the control of a pious and well-regulated mind: it was all over — the pang was ended, and Burford was no longer any thing to her.

It was not until dinner-time that Lady Hester again saw the marquess. Lord Elmsdale had been smiling gently, and whispering pretty platitudes for an hour before dinner; and had even gone the length of trying a pair of bracelets on Lady Hester's arms, which she had chosen from a brilliant *recueil* placed before her by the jeweller. The ring too was selected — that ring, which was to bind her to her lord and master through life: — it seemed all like a dreadful dream; but it continued, and Lady Hester awakened not from it.

The party assembled — the dinner proceeded, and still the marquess said not a word about his son, until the ladies were on the point of retiring. The conversation had continued with its wonted restraint, and no mention had been made of Lord Malvern, much to the astonishment of Lady Hester, who began to think that her father had not received the letter which her brother told her he had sent. The truth is, that the marquess had determined to treat his son's absence as a matter of no importance; and although he knew it would be necessary, because it would seem natural, to touch upon the subject before the party separated, it required time, wine, and preparation, to work him up, or perhaps down, into a placidity which he considered it right to assume, in speaking of a point on which he had received so sharp and deep a wound — at length the effort was made.

"I am sorry, Elmsdale," said the marquess, that poor Malvern is unable to come to us."

"Indeed!" said his lordship; "ill?"

"Exactly so," said Lord Snowdon; "he has had some attack at Paris on his way hither from Tours, and his medical people positively interdict his moving."

Lady Hester looked at her father as he told this decided untruth, and thought she never beheld his high-mightiness look so exceedingly small.

"I did not like to mention this before dinner," continued the marquess: "his illness, he writes me word, is not serious; but from what his doctor says, I should not think he will recover sufficiently to travel for some time."

As his lordship was "in for it," he fancied he might as well increase the imaginary sickness of his son to a sufficient degree, to render his absence from the second marriage in the family no more remarkable to the "world," than his non-appearance at the first.

"It is a sad blow upon you, Hester, dear, I know," said the marquess; "he desires his affectionate love to you — his best regards to you, Lord Elmsdale; and many of the same sort of remembrances he sends to you, Lady Katharine, and to you Elizabeth."

Lady Hester was astounded; she could not help exchanging a look with Anne, which, if it had been detected by the "illustrious," would have betrayed to his keen and acute mind that he had been "found out" by his favourite child and her favourite friend; luckily, however, the last part of his speech was addressed to his intended wife, who sat on his right hand, and he did not see the telegraphing which was going on at the other end of the table.

"Dear, dear," said Lady Katharine, "I hope nothing serious is the matter with him — I have no great faith in French doctors: the only one I ever knew personally was a Doctor Laballe, he was a cousin of one of the Montmorencis, a very great creature in his time. By the way, that Miss Dancer, who afterwards married the man who did something particular in Ireland — I recollect her father was a banker; he was in parliament once — and was poor dear

Mr. Oldham's colleague: they were returned together in opposition to Lord Drumbuggle's interest, which interest, by the way, he secured, by marrying Miss Polsden, who was the ——"

"Hester, dear ——" said the marquess, having, for a minute at least, endeavoured to catch her eye.

The words, and the tone in which they were uttered, announced to Lady Hester that her hour was come, and that she must go; for Lady Katharine's tirades had now become unbearable to Lord Snowdon; and with all his grace and dignity he did not consider it necessary to conceal how much they "bored" him by any thing like attention to them; on the contrary, if it were possible, he took the most decisive steps for either cutting them short, or avoiding them altogether.

As Lady Katharine upon the present occasion was not first in rank, and the hint of Lord Snowdon to his daughter was overheard by the lady who actually was placed in that position, the party was abruptly dissolved, just as the pedigree of the Polsdens was commenced. Lady Katharine, however, was not to be beaten so easily; and as the ladies passed away from the dinner-room, she might have been heard explaining why French physicians were not to be trusted, until her breath was exhausted, and her history terminated just at the drawing-room door by an eulogy upon Taglioni's dancing, and her ladyship's wonderment at the construction of the Thames Tunnel.

"One change," said Lord Snowdon to Lord Elmsdale after the ladies were gone, "must be made in our proceedings in consequence of poor Malvern's illness: we are deprived of my chaplain's services — he cannot spare him. Mr. Burford is a good creature, and has made himself so useful and essential to my son, that at such a period it would be cruel to deprive him of his society. It is a sad thing upon that person himself, for of course it would have been a most agreeable and gratifying thing to him, to have had so important a share in securing Hester's happiness; however, I would not hear of it; and I have written to the Bishop of Dorchester, who had previously volunteered

his services, and who is an old friend of Hester's, and will, of course, as I have written to him, officiate."

"Good," said Lord Elmsdale, and sipped his wine.

"I think, upon the whole, it may look better," said the marquess, "having a bishop."

"Yes," answered the son-in-law, who three days before had said yes to exactly the opposite proposition.

"I have desired them," continued the marquess, "to order horses for you down the road, and I trust you will find every thing comfortable at the castle."

"Umph," said Lord Elmsdale, looking very much obliged.

Lord Elsmdale said nothing more; and the other two guests who had whispered a little conversation to each other, looked sufficiently uncomfortable to justify the marquess in proposing to go to coffee, and the party forthwith measured their course towards the ladies, none of whom appeared in better spirits, nor more inclined to sociability than the new arrivals from below had been before. Lady Hester felt herself degraded by the detection of her father's evident disregard for truth, and worried at the concealment of the real cause of Lord Malvern's absence. She watched the countenance of Miss Oldham when his name was mentioned, and saw no symptom of the slightest care or recollection of him. In the then temper of her mind, it was impossible for her to associate with her future mother-in-law without restraint; while Lady Katharine, attributing the evident coldness of Lady Hester to a feeling of dislike of the intended connexion, took every opportunity of setting her own dear Elizabeth up as the standard of perfection, corroborating all her highest flights of praise, by citing Mr. Frederick Richardson as an unquestionable authority in favour of her daughter's excellence.

This, which had something of the bathos in it, and seemed not very dissimilar to the needless absurdity which the infallible pope commits by confessing his own sins to his own little dirty-faced, ragged-tailed fallible priest — having the omnipotent power of universal forgiveness in his own hands — more provoked Lady Hester than any thing else in the whole affair. That a dandy of the fourth

class, at the highest, should be perpetually brought forward and held up as the arbiter upon all discussable points in the family, seemed not only so foolish but so indelicate, that if her own sorrows had not almost entirely occupied her mind, it would have required the full exertion of all her gentleness and philosophy, to keep her from expressing her opinion of a line of conduct upon which two opinions could not in fact exist.

From the evening now alluded to, till the wedding-day, a very short period would intervene; still, near as the event was, it seemed to Lady Hester's mind impossible that it should occur: it seemed impossible that in a very few days more, she should be united for life to the man whom she saw standing listening to her father's declamation upon politics, apparently neither feeling nor understanding the point or object of his eloquence, taking no share in the discussion, nor indeed interest in any thing; that for the rest of her natural life she was to be his companion in sickness and in health, to love, honour, and obey him. It seemed as if it were all an imposition, a deceit, a vision. — When she retired to her dressing-room, and found there the splendid evidence of preparation for the ceremony, which was so soon to unite them eternally, a pang struck to her heart — she sickened at the sight, and when, after grasping in her trembling hands the ornaments destined to adorn her person on the fatal morning of her wretched marriage, she threw them from her — her eyes filled with tears, and she sank upon her couch in an agony of grief.

The culprit destined to die feels how swiftly those hours fly which precede his execution; his courage exerted, his nerves braced, and his mind made up, he meets the blow with fortitude, and ends the horrid night by dying. But she who lingers through the same space of time, and hears at length the merry peal of mirth summoning her to church, instead of the tolling bell announcing the approach of death, has no such termination to her pangs in view. She commences a new life after the death-blow of her hopes has fallen; years of prospective misery are before her — of misery heightened by the sad reflec-

tion of what she has lost — and she kneels before her Maker, and registers an oath to fulfil all the most important duties of her existence, in acknowledged opposition to the strongest passions and the warmest feelings of her nature.

This was the prospect before poor Lady Hester, to this was she driven by the fear of a father, who loved her as much as he could love any thing beside himself; a fear founded on the knowledge of his imperious disposition, his unmitigable pride, and his personal vanity, which she too well knew would induce him to denounce irrevocably any human being who might act either as principal or accessory, in any measure calculated to unsettle what he had previously arranged, or alter or qualify what he had before decided upon.

If Lord Snowdon could have believed that his daughter was destined to be unhappy for life, because she married Lord Elmsdale, the chances were considerably in favour of his not forcing her inclinations; but his vanity of an imaginary superiority of intellect always led him to believe that he, of himself, knew better what was calculated to make the happiness of others than they themselves. His view of the case was, that Lady Hester, even at her time of life and under her circumstances, however superior to every body else of her age, or standing in society, was incapable of judging what was necessary to secure her comfort through life. *He* knew the excellence of Lord Elmsdale's character, the extent of his fortune, the value of his influence, and the importance of his connexions. As for the man — the individual man, so long as he had the necessary number of legs and arms, and eyes and ears, to pass muster with his fellow-creatures, his lordship did not pause to inquire whether he, the man of himself, was personally agreeable to his daughter. And certainly, if he had been much interested in that part of the subject, he would have had plenty of opportunities of forming the opinion that he was not. He believed he had secured her happiness; and having so made up his mind, all the rest was to be left to fate, and his will and pleasure were to be executed without either question or discussion.

The train of evils which a refusal of this "suitable offer" would have brought with it had therefore driven the unfortunate bride into her present position. She was sure, as she had all along felt, that resistance to her father's command would produce a rigid examination by him of the actual state of her heart. Her acknowledgment would have been the double ruin of her happiness, and of that of the real object of her affections. In his anger, Lord Snowdon would have set no limits to his revenge for the indignity offered to his house and family, by the subordinate acceptor of his kindness, the smooth-tongued creature of his bounty; and the result would have been, that instead of one broken heart there would have been two, and poor Lady Hester would have lingered in the world, conscious of having rendered miserable for life the being for whom, of all created beings, she felt the tenderest regard.

The whole of the next two or three days the marquess was occupied in arranging the proceedings of the wedding. Town was still empty — it would look extremely well to have a good attendance. At length, puzzled how to put the affair as it ought to be, he went the length of writing, with his own proper hand, a prospective account of the proceedings. Strange as it may seem, his elastic mind, like the trunk of the elephant, could break down oaks or pick up pins; and accordingly, before dinner on the Sunday, he had concocted the following history, which, not choosing to trust any body in his establishment with the fact of his authorship, he copied four several times; and having enclosed those copies in covers, addressed them to the Morning Post, the Times, the Chronicle, and the Herald, slipped them, unseen by mortal eye, into the box of the two-penny post-office at the corner of Albemarle Street, as he condescendingly walked home from Brookes's, on the night preceding the ceremonial so minutely detailed.

The literary trifle, which entitles his lordship to a place amongst our "noble authors," ran as follows: —

"MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.

"Yesterday morning was married at St. George's, Han-

over Square, by special licence, the Right Hon. the Earl of Elmsdale, to the Right Hon. Lady Hester Plinlimmon, the lovely daughter of the Most Noble the Marquess of Snowdon.

"The ceremony was performed by the Lord Bishop of Dorchester, who arrived in town from his episcopal palace for the purpose.

"There were present the Duke and Duchess of St. Leonard's, and Lady Anne Pennyfather; the Earl and Countess of Hungerford; the Earl and Countess of Haversham; Lord and Lady Warrington; Lord Sillyman; Lord and Lady Roughshod, and the Hon. Miss Clapper; Lady Katharine, and Miss Oldham; Sir George and Lady Chimneypot; Colonel and Lady Elizabeth Windmill; Sir Francis Macgrizzle, Mr. Toadman, Mr. Frederick Richardson, Mr. Dancer; Count Cockadolgey, Baron Von Snuffenburg, and several others of the foreign ministers.

"Immediately after the marriage, the party proceeded to Grosvenor Square, where numerous other guests were waiting its arrival, and the company sat down at one o'clock, to a *déjeûné-à-la-fourchette,* comprising all the delicacies of the season, the whole of which was served upon the magnificent service of gold plate, used on the occasion of the late royal visit to Lionsden Castle.

'The bride, who appeared in excellent health and spirits, was dressed in magnificent Valenciennes lace, and looked extremely handsome. At about two, the new married couple, having previously changed their costume, left town for Lionsden, in a new and elegant travelling-carriage, drawn by four horses belonging to the celebrated stud of the noble bridegroom.

"The company, amounting to upwards of forty, then separated."

The realisation of all this programme was now indeed near at hand; and on Sunday, after a day as unlike in all its circumstances to that which the "day before the wedding" might be supposed to be, poor Lady Hester retired to her room to seek her pillow, as Moore says,

"The last time she e'er was to press it alone."

Miss Everingham wished to stay with her, and talk over the embarrassing peculiarities of her situation; but Lady Hester declined her society much as she valued it: she had made up her mind — all discussion was useless — all resistance now would be out of the question — and like one devoted, she preferred to pass the waking hours of the night in prayer and preparation, for what the world was to believe the happy ceremony of the following morning.

The day dawned and grew, and Lady Hester's maid came to her, and the ordinary routine of the toilet began. Miss Everingham visited her unhappy friend before she had finished dressing, and a brief conversation ensued, which, whatever the details might have been, was ill-calculated to assuage or fortify the feelings of the reluctant bride. The increasing noise and hurry amongst the establishment proclaimed the already begun arrivals of some of the invited guests; and in a few minutes, the marquess himself was at the door of her dressing-room, to know if he could speak to her.

Hester admitted him, and he kissed the cold forehead of his miserable daughter.

"My dear child," said his lordship, "I could not permit you to see our friends, until I had begged you to accept, as a mark of a father's affection and esteem, this little *cadeau*," placing in her hand a beautiful set of pearls. "Elmsdale had the first claim to present you with marriage gifts; it is reserved for *me* to entreat you sometimes to wear these, and think of a parent, whose happiness is so deeply involved in that of his child."

Lady Hester could make no reply. To think that the father who expressed — and sincerely too — such feelings towards his daughter, should in the very hour of his uttering them, expect her to consummate the act, which eternally and irrevocably insured her misery: — it seemed almost as if she were compromising her dignity, and confirming her own hypocrisy, in accepting the trinkets; and she was on the point of seizing that last opportunity of throwing herself at her father's feet, and confessing the whole truth; when the habitual fear which was predominant in all her serious intercourse with the marquess

triumphed — she accepted the pearls, and promised to be punctual to the time appointed for the movement of the procession to church.

From this period to that at which she left the house of her father, Lady Hester moved and acted as if she were in a trance: her forehead burned, her hands were icy cold, an aching pain seemed fixed in her heart, and all she did, she did mechanically and almost unconsciously. She was told that all was ready — her father came to lead her down stairs — the crowd had gathered in the street — the carriages were drawn up to the door. Eleven equipages in line at that period of the year created a very considerable sensation; and as the marquess stepped into Lord Elmsdale's town chariot, he felt greatly pleased at perceiving amongst the assembled throng many of his own tradesmen and their families, gaily dressed, looking anxiously at the proceedings, and joining in the murmur of approbation which gave evidence of their opinion of the beauty and elegance of the wretched heroine of the day.

They reached the church, and entered it by the Maddox Street door, and the assembled party were placed in their proper positions within the sacred building; but there appeared no clergyman to perform the ceremony. The marquess had announced that the Bishop of Dorchester would officiate, but his lordship had not arrived: a message was despatched to his town-house; the servants there had heard nothing of his lordship. Something it was necessary to do to obviate the consequence of this painful and unlooked-for disappointment; and, after three quarters of an hour, a young gentleman, who had just taken orders (and who was luckily caught by the clerk), proceeded to make his *début* in the clerical character, by performing the ceremony

The said poor young gentleman, under the tuition of the said clerk, after having started by reading the beginning of the ceremony for "the baptism of those of riper years," (a mistake, which tended very much to divest the solemnity of its solemn character, and to cause sundry smiles to play over the countenances of all the company, except those of the marquess and his daughter,) commenced

the office of matrimony. As for his lordship, the failure of the bishop was too serious a calamity, as far as effect went, for him to recover from very soon; and this defection was made more painful, by the striking contrast to the dignity of the prelate, which the inexperience of the curate so ludicrously exhibited. However, the ceremony went on in earnest. Lady Hester trembled like a leaf — her sobs interrupted the diffident minister, and excited the most serious apprehensions on the part of Miss Everingham, who was near her. She bore up, however, against the torrent of feeling which nearly overwhelmed her, until the question was put to her, "whether she would have that man to be her wedded husband?"

It seemed as if the reply would have choked her — she struggled to pronounce it — the convulsive effort failed her — and, uttering a piercing shriek, which made the vaulted roof reverberate, she sank, apparently dead, on the floor of the church.

The consternation caused by this extraordinary event may be more easily imagined than described; the young clergyman, who, as we know, had never before officiated upon a similar occasion, seemed doubtful whether, in good society, such a scene was considered an essential part of the exhibition. Those who had themselves submitted to the operation, knew better; and in an instant the senseless girl was lifted from the earth and borne to the vestry-room, where the usual restoratives were administered, but without producing the desired effect. What was to be done? they were in the midst of medical advice; assistance was called in; but all hope of her being competent to conclude the ceremony at that time was very speedily abandoned. At one moment she had so far recovered as to be conscious where she was; but, to the horror of the whole party, and of the awkwardly situated bridegroom in particular, the moment he approached to offer a little of his harmless consolation she repeated the shriek she had before given, and hiding her face with her hands, relapsed into utter insensibility.

The marquess was now "fooled to the top of his bent." The extent of his agony and vexation, first at the unexpected frustration of all his hopes — at the serious effect

produced upon his child — at the painful dilemma in which Lord Elmsdale was placed — but most of all at the absurd appearance the whole affair would have with the town, is as indescribable as it was incalculable.

The earliest alarm of the catastrophe was given to the mob, by the hurried rush out of the beadle to fetch a physician. The cause was soon known; and this practical announcement of the failure in the first instance of completing the union of the parties was very shortly after confirmed with the additional certainty that they would not be married that day, by the sudden exit of the young curate from the vestry-room door, who, seeing no probability of ultimate success in the then present proceedings, set off as hard as he could to fulfil an engagement which he had entered into, to make his first appearance that day in the funeral line, by burying a baby at Bayswater at half after one.

Lady Hester did not rally sufficiently to be removed for nearly an hour. She was then placed in the carriage between Miss Everingham and the Duchess of St. Leonard's, and conveyed slowly to Grosvenor Square, all the visiters present at the intended marriage, except the Oldhams and Cornet Richardson, betaking themselves to their respective homes, to the right and to the left: Lord Snowdon and his intended son-in-law proceeding in his carriage to the home of his beloved.

In the drawing-room were assembled those who had been invited to the *déjeûner*, and not to the wedding. Happy, hungry souls, they had been waiting an hour longer than they had calculated upon, and were prepared to congratulate and feast in the most unsparing manner. This Lord Snowdon did not so much care for: there they were, and they might go or stay, exactly as they chose; but he *did* turn nearly sick, when he saw the new and elegant travelling carriage, which was to have been drawn by "four beautiful horses belonging to the celebrated stud of Lord Elmsdale," standing at the door of his mansion with four posters — sent by mistake from the stables by Lord Elmsdale's servants — and a crowd of people admiring and wondering at the beauty and neatness of the vehicle, destined, as his

lordship knew, to be drawn back to the coach-house empty and unoccupied.

Poor Lady Hester was conveyed to her room, and eventually placed in bed, when it was pronounced, not only by the physician whom the beadle had selected, but by Sir Henry himself, who had been immediately afterwards sent for, that the case was one of extreme delicacy; both joining in a conviction of the absolute necessity of perfect quietude. Miss Everingham, whose affection for her friend was now proved by the earnestness of her assiduities and the entirety of her devotion, took charge of her, and received the warmest acknowledgments from the marquess, whose state of mind did not permit him to decide upon the course he should ultimately pursue, but who was satisfied on one point, that his ill fated daughter was not married as he had intended her to be—a failure in his design, rendered the more uncomfortable by the recollection of the little *historiettes* of the proceedings which he had so anxiously furnished for the daily newspapers, not one of which he could either recover or explain away, without betraying himself to the gentlemen of the press, in having volunteered his labours as an amateur court newsman; every circumstance detailed in his authentic communications having been so totally unlike the events which had actually occurred, that if his account should be inserted, public attention would, of course, be specially directed to the *real* facts, by the absolute necessity which the veracious editors would be under, of contradicting what turned out, by a succession of mishaps, to be neither more nor less a than a tissue of falsehoods.

Most of the party took leave the moment the extremely disagreeable disappointment was explained to them. The marquess was glad to be rid of them, as of course was Lord Elmsdale, who remained behind to be managed and soothed by his noble father-in-law; yet, in the heart of the illustrious master of the mansion, there rankled some regrets, that all the magnificent preparations for the banquet had been made in vain, and that the splendid gold service, "used on the occasion of the royal visit to Lionsden," had not been seen; nor was his serenity of mind much better

secured, when, on pushing open the door of the dinner-room where the *déjeûner* was laid, in order to cast one lingering, longing look at the taste and elegance of its arrangement, he beheld, although every other individual except Lord Elmsdale, who was up stairs, had departed, Lady Katharine and Miss Elizabeth Oldham exhibiting countenances expressive of neither pain nor sorrow, seated at the upper end of the table, demolishing, with the most healthful appetites the delicacies spread before them, in which pursuit they were zealously assisted by Mr. Frederick Richardson, and a Mr. Losh, a friend of his, whom he had "taken the liberty" of bringing with him to the wedding banquet.

The marquess looked in, saw the group, and hastily closing the door, proceeded to the library, in order to have, what he had no doubt must be a very important conversation with the disappointed Lord Elmsdale.

CHAPTER IX.

We must now recur to France. — The letter of poor Lady Hester, which she had intended to soothe the feelings of her brother, and heal the wounds which she perhaps might be conscious she had inflicted on the heart of his companion, did, as it unfortunately turned out, produce a perfectly contrary effect. In all that she had said to Lord Malvern, she had satisfied him that she went with sorrow and reluctance to the altar; and what she had said with respect to his companion, convinced him that *he* was the object upon whom her affections were fixed.

In health, Lord Malvern was by no means strong or well. The shock he had received from the suddenness of the intelligence of his father's marriage had seriously affected him; and the enlightenment which he had obtained from Lady Hester as to the alteration in Miss Oldham's manner, and even character, however much it might reconcile him mentally to the circumstance, did not succeed

in removing the bodily ills which the surprise had in the first instance produced.

In the state of listless indolence to which Lord Malvern had been so suddenly reduced, it grieved Burford very much to see that the apprehensions of his talented mother, with respect to the possibility of his being caught by her daughter, were not so entirely groundless as he had at first imagined them to be. Of course he could make no remark to his sister, no observation to his parent; but it was impossible not to notice that Lord Malvern felt happier and more at ease when Miss Burford was present. She sang to him, as she had done earlier in life; but her sweet voice was sweeter now than then, and her improvement in the art had neither brought with it forwardness nor affectation: she sang *from* the heart, *to* the heart, and seemed to feel the force of the words which she uttered so melodiously, and to which the expression of a charming, intelligent, and intellectual countenance gave additional strength and power.

It was not, however, the mere superficiality of every-day accomplishments that riveted Lord Malvern's attention to this amiable girl. The soft gentleness of her manner, the quality of her mind, and the graceful readiness and simplicity with which she conducted herself as a daughter towards her exemplary and revered parent, were to him new and beautiful to see. He had lost his own mother before he was of an age to know her, or appreciate her tenderness. He and his sister had been brought up unconscious of the best and kindliest feelings of our nature. The young lord had proceeded through the different forms of a public school, and then through the routine of the university: he had visited his paternal homes at stated seasons, and enjoyed the society of his sister, but not in the calm and quiet sense of the word enjoyment: large parties, large rooms, large establishments, noble banquets, glittering parties, and vast assemblies, were the attributes of Lionsden and Grosvenor Square. He had never known the sweet attraction of maternal affection, and never had received the unquestionable advantages of a mother's care and solicitude. Of that sort of calm and unostentatious

comfort which springs from filial duty and maternal love he had no notion.—To be at home, with *him*, was to be mixing in one continued round of gaiety and dissipation. Succeeding to this came his protracted tour, agreeable in an eminent degree, but characterised by a restless activity and constant change. To *him*, then, we say, the intellectual character of his intercourse with the happy family in which he had thought proper to domesticate himself, was, upon every account, winning and attractive.

In the intervals of Maria's singing, Burford read to them, and then the gentle Maria worked, as did her mother. What they did in that way Lord Malvern never could exactly ascertain. The same long strips, hemmed and cut, and shut up in boxes at the end of the evening, seemed always to be the objects of their care; but it was employment, and had but one drawback in his lordship's opinion — it kept the soft blue eyes of the gentle girl fixed downwards. Upon what his lordship's eyes were generally riveted, Mrs. Burford, who occasionally lifted hers (cased too in glasses) from her muslin strips, and her son, who now and then glanced from his book, very soon ascertained. However, the nearly approaching execution of the old lady's plan satisfied her that it "made no great difference for a day or two;" and so the poor young lord lay becalmed, as it were, in this little haven of peace and affection; and charmed as he was with its sweet serenity, felt that he had never been at home before.

Nothing is more dangerous to the heart than this sort of quiet enjoyment: — the constant association with a lovely girl, whose conduct in her own circle gives earnest of her excellence in a more extended sphere, renders her, to a man of genuine feeling, an object of intense interest. The unaffected kindness and unrestrained attention which Lord Malvern experienced from Maria Burford, during the period when he was really suffering from the illness produced by the sudden shock which he had received, excited his gratitude, and commanded his esteem. Situated as he was, these were ominous symptoms of a much more serious complaint; and, although, as we have already seen, neither Mrs. Burford nor her son could say a word to Maria upon

the subject, which might, if they had done so, be construed by her into a reproach for forwardness, or a suspicion that she was endeavouring to gain an influence over their self-invited guest, the circumstances only confirmed the watchful parent in the expediency of the plan she had organised, but which, so long as she felt herself mistaken in her anticipation of results, she did not mean to put into execution.

The change in Lord Malvern's manner kept pace with the improvement of his health. He was no longer restless and feverish; he was calm and gentle, and sought no relaxation or amusement beyond the threshold of the house. To be read to by Burford, sung to by his sister, talked to by his mother, and attended to by all three of them, seemed to him the height of human enjoyment; and when he could be prevailed upon to take an airing, it was invariably in a carriage sufficiently capacious to carry "four insides." In short, ten or twelve days' residence had so completely domesticated him, that the old lady felt convinced the time had already arrived when it was her duty to announce the departure of herself and daughter.

It is impossible not to appreciate the delicacy and tenderness of this exemplary parent. In *her* way, she was as proud as Lord Snowdon; and would rather have seen her daughter a beggar, than the despised and neglected adjunct of the aristocracy, her connexion with which the world, and one who was greater than all the rest of the world put together, the marquess himself, would not fail to attribute to her cunning and adroitness.

It was resolved that Burford should announce to Lord Malvern the arrival of the summons of his mother to England. And as it had been deemed expedient to keep Maria entirely in the dark as to the reality of the invitation, the announcement was to be made to *her* at the same time, in order that the surprise which she would naturally exhibit might obviate any suspicion in his lordship's mind that the proposed journey was a stroke of policy, or a matter of family arrangement.

To some mothers it may appear that Mrs. Burford acted indiscreetly, if not ungenerously, and cruelly, if not incau-

tiously, in permitting the intimacy between the young lord and her daughter to continue even so long as it did; and those of the Snowdon faction will, no doubt, discover that no surer mode of catching a heart can be pursued than permitting a social intercourse between two people of congenial habits, assimilitating tastes, and sympathising feelings, up to a certain point, and then suddenly terminating it;—they will, however, do Mrs. Burford a great injustice. It is true she anticipated the possibility of such an effect being produced as she had mentioned to her son, and the result too soon convinced her of the correctness of her supposition; but, as a matter of common civility, having permitted the domestication of Lord Malvern, she could not sooner have framed an excuse for quitting him, more particularly after the expression of his happiness at possessing such a home, and such resources, at a moment when his heart and mind were so torn and harassed.

On the morning of the intended communication of their departure, Lord Malvern received his sister's long and interesting letter. It came at a curious crisis. As the reader knows, it announced the almost incomprehensible change in Elizabeth Oldham's manners and feelings, and the certainty of her unqualified defection and heartlessness. The knowledge of this wonderful alteration in all the circumstances of his "case" naturally threw the young nobleman's thoughts into an entirely new channel. His father could no longer be considered the tyrant oppressing innocence, or the conspirator with Lady Katharine, in purchasing the happiness of Miss Oldham with his offer of rank and fortune. It appeared she was the willing and consenting acceptor of his proposal; a proposal which, it is hardly necessary to observe, was made without the slightest knowledge, on the marquess's part, of any supposed prior attachment of the young lady to any body else, much less to his own son.

This enlightenment, while it very much moderated the asperity of his feelings towards his father, very considerably decreased his lordship's regret and solicitude about his future mother-in-law. Amongst a thousand excellent women it is but fair to expect one Elizabeth Oldham; and

although his sorrow now assumed the character of anger, and his late despair and commiseration of her fate turned to something very like hatred and contempt, the new feeling that was generated was of infinitely more importance to the family circle in the *Allée des Veuves* than any which the intelligence he had just received had induced him to discard. He had been slighted — deceived — forgotten — jilted. To this he could not quietly submit; he instantly contrasted in his mind the flippant gaiety and superficial accomplishments of Elizabeth Oldham with the gentle manners and sterling qualities of Maria Burford.

Decidedly unequal marriages never answer. Both parties are placed in false positions; and a married life between such persons in general consists of a constant struggle between the jarring inclinations, and not unfrequently the clashing connexions of either party. It is true that we have seen most amiable persons raised to high rank and station by marriage, who have done honour to that rank and station; but the experiment is a hazardous one, and one which Lord Malvern, young as he was, was wise enough not to think of trying; but — for it seems his views and considerations had, in eight short days, taken that turn — the difference in station between Miss Elizabeth Oldham and Miss Maria Burford was very trifling indeed. The grandmother of Miss Burford had been the daughter of a baron, whose daughter had married a clergyman; the mother of Miss Oldham was the daughter of an earl who had married a merchant in the city: so that taking an average (as that respectable gentleman himself, now no more, would have said) of the pretensions of both, it seemed as if the division of honours would turn out to be pretty equal. This comparison, however, was not judiciously made by Lord Malvern: it was not between Miss Burford and Miss Oldham it should have been instituted, but between Miss Burford and the young lady of exalted rank and unbounded wealth, whom Lord Snowdon had decided upon as Lord Malvern's future wife. Lord Snowdon might marry Miss Oldham, because his race was nearly run; but his son had to increase the fame and

fortune of the family, and therefore, he must make a more noble and wealthy alliance.

Upon this calculation, erroneous as it was, throwing into the scale the intimate friendship which existed between Lord Malvern and Burford, and making a comparison between the exemplary and agreeable mother of the young lady, and the old painted cockatoo, whose incessant gabble was calculated to drive any man mad in a week; and, above all, adding to these the fact that he had been slighted and forgotten by the one, and assiduously and kindly attended to by the other, it is not surprising that the complaint with which Mr. Burford began to suspect Lord Malvern had really begun to be attacked should receive a very violent accession during the following day.

It was not, however, to Lord Malvern alone that Lady Hester's letter was so deeply interesting. That part which referred to Burford convinced the young lord that his suspicions were correct, and that to Burford's modesty and delicacy alone were attributable his opinion — at least his declared opinion — of Lady Hester's sentiments as regarded him. There was in the caution with which she touched the subject ample proof of its importance to her. She trod lightly and loitered not on the ground which she knew to be undermined; and in the studious avoidance of any thing which might be considered particular in the way of remembrance, her brother beheld the ratification of all his suspicions of the real nature and character of her *friendship* for his companion.

"Well, Charles," said his lordship, after he had read Lady Hester's letter, "what think you now?" — all women are not faultless. I suppose it was *my* vanity, but I certainly thought Elizabeth Oldham, at one time, devoted to me; and it was that feeling which first drew my attention most particularly to her. Vanity took the place of judgment; I was flattered by what I fancied her preference, and mistook the gratitude of a dupe for the devotion of a lover. Now, that my eyes are opened, shall I grieve, shall I pine and wear the willow? No, Charles, for *me* there are yet hopes of happiness. Ah!" added he thoughtfully, "but for my poor sister all is misery. I will not

ask you for an opinion upon that passage of her letter where she speaks of *you*, but content myself with reproaching you for not reposing a confidence in me, upon a subject so nearly connected with the happiness of the two beings to whom I am most attached on earth; or if there be a third, Charles ——"

"My dear Malvern," interrupted Burford, who was alarmed at the earnestness of Lord Malvern's manner, and trembled lest the already complicated affairs of the Plinlimmons should get another twist by an untoward confession; "spare me — I am content, and bow to my fate; duty and reason bade me stifle a feeling which I ought never to have permitted to exist. All that man could do I did — I withdrew from your society while you were constantly at home, and withdrew *you* from home before I ventured to enjoy it."

"But why so?" said Lord Malvern.

"I saw ruin and destruction to all of us, in my continuance at Lionsden," replied Burford.

"I was aware of my father's views for Hester," said Lord Malvern, "but you see by her letter how perfectly justified I am in my suspicions of what would be the result of his efforts to realise them. Would I not — or ought he not — rather to have rejoiced in the union of his child with a man worthy of her — a man ——"

"My dear Malvern," interrupted Burford, "*I* cannot, from my station in life, and *you* cannot, from the ingenuousness of your character and inexperience in the world, properly appreciate the feelings which actuate a man of your father's principles and pretensions. All I have to implore of you is never to recur to the subject: all is now over — your sister in a few days will be the wife of an amiable and honourable man, of suitable rank and fortune; and nothing is left for *me* but to pray for her happiness, in a sphere of life to which nothing but madness could ever have lifted my thoughts or feelings as connected with her."

"Perhaps," said Lord Malvern, "I shall, at no very great distance of time, convince you that the approximation of our spheres is not a matter of so much doubt or difficulty as you may imagine. There is ——"

"My dear Malvern," said Burford, who truly enough anticipated the turn which the conversation was about to take, and was resolutely determined to check it in the outset, "the carriage has been at the door nearly an hour."

'Has it?" said Lord Malvern, smiling with a sort of consciousness of having made up his mind to some measure which he felt sure would surprise his friend and companion; — "when will your mother and sister be ready?"

"I think they are not going out to-day," said Burford.

"See," said Lord Malvern, "because if they are not inclined for a drive, I am for home: we can enjoy our own society here, as well as in the Bois de Boulogne."

"But the air and exercise," said Burford; "recollect the doctor."

"I need no doctors now, Charles," answered Lord Malvern; "my cure has been effected by my sister's letter: there is, I assure you, infinitely greater danger in a new complaint than a relapse. Go see about the ladies: I shall not go if they do not; so either they drive, or we remain *chez nous*. I have promised Maria to give her her *revanche* at chess; and if we do not make an excursion, we will play our game before dinner, and so have more time for music in the evening."

"Still harping upon my daughter," says Polonius. Burford felt very much like the old chamberlain with regard to his sister; and began to calculate — since this was to be the last day of their social intercourse — which was the more prudent measure — chess at home, or the drive abroad. He decided for the latter. There is a sort of intimate connexion between the hostile parties at chess, when they happen to be of different sexes, which sometimes converts their scientific opposition into an artless agreement: the player becomes the only queen the lover wishes to check-mate, and when he ends his game finds his own heart the last pawn.

As the whole of this final day was one of fever and worry, Mrs. Burford, who had established a complete understanding with her son as to the mode of managing matters so as to avoid a crisis, took the hint which he gave her to rescind the resolution she had, under his advice, formed

of not going out, and hastened to prepare herself and her child for the drive.

It was the first time they had felt dull or embarrassed. Maria's natural gentleness and sweetness of manner were chilled and constrained by an evident restlessness on the part of her mother, arising not only from the consciousness of what was to occur in the way of announcement of their departure, but from what her son had told her of the evident turn of Lord Malvern's mind, and the peculiarity of his conduct, after he had heard the true history of Miss Oldham's defection. Burford's spirits were naturally much depressed, for the wedding-day of her whom alone he loved on earth was speedily indeed to arrive; and the conversation which had passed between him and his friend, although, in point of fact, it could neither recall what was past, nor undo what was done, and could not satisfy even himself of the probability of his ever having brought his suit to a successful issue, certainly implied a possibility that such a result might have been attained if he had exerted his energies a little more, or adopted a line of conduct more characterised by that without which it is proverbially said "fair lady never was won."

No reflection could be much more galling — the idea that if he had done *this*, or if he had said *that*, things might have all gone differently and perhaps prosperously And yet what *could* have happened? nothing to soothe the marquess, and every thing to involve both his children in domestic warfare against him. This ought to have calmed and tranquillised him; and so in all probability on any other day it would, but on this particular day, when he had ascertained the very hour in which Lady Hester was to become the wife of another, it required more than his ordinary philosophy to check the natural current of his thoughts.

Lord Malvern was infected with the general gloom. He spoke more of his own sister than pleased Burford, and looked more at Burford's sister than pleased her mother. She could not avoid noticing the marked tenderness of his manner towards her child, nor could she disguise from herself the pleasure which Maria seemed to feel in his so-

ciety. Still, however, a few hours would terminate the affair, and she should have the satisfaction of knowing that she had done her duty.

The drive concluded, and the party returned, not much time elapsed before dinner—*the* dinner after which the scheme of emigration was to be broached. The heretofore social meal passed in a sort of fitful silence, and had been concluded for more than half an hour before the matron felt herself adequate to the announcement of her design.

At length she mustered up courage to begin.

"I am going," said Mrs. Burford, "I think, to surprise you, Lord Malvern—I am sure I shall surprise my daughter—my son is aware of my proceedings—Maria and I are going to London immediately."

"Me!" exclaimed Maria.

"Maria!" exclaimed Lord Malvern; "to London! for what?"

"I have received a letter," said Mrs. Burford, "which requires my presence there at the beginning of next week; it is law business, and must be attended to, and *my* presence and that of my daughter are indispensable."

"Impossible! my dear Mrs. Burford," said Lord Malvern: "you are telling us this to make us implore and entreat you to stay; in short, teaching us properly to appreciate your society, by threatening to rob us of it."

"Indeed, no," said Mrs. Burford; "nothing can be more disagreeable than the journey and all its concomitants, but I have a duty to perform, and I must do it."

"When did you get this letter?" said Miss Burford, in a tone which was satisfactory only to Lord Malvern, who playfully took up the question in a similar tone, and repeated it verbatim.

"This morning, Maria," said the matron; "it concerns you very nearly, and therefore I thought I would not tell you of it before it was necessary."

"Me!" said Miss Burford, wonderingly.

"I think you are joking," said Lord Malvern.

"No," said Burford, "my mother is in earnest; she has consulted me upon the possibility of her avoiding the journey, but I see no alternative."

"When do you propose to return?" said his lordship.

"That," replied the lady, "is very uncertain indeed. I should say in all probability, never."

"Then," said Lord Malvern, with an unusually thoughtful expression in his countenance, "I am the cause of your going. I have intruded myself — I have deranged your establishment — I am a burden to you, and have driven you from your charming retirement."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Burford; "nothing has ever given me more pleasure than receiving your lordship here, and most happy should I have been to continue your hostess; but I think Charles has too frequently inculcated upon your mind the importance of fulfilling our duties, to render it necessary for me to say more than that duty calls me away, and I cannot resist the appeal."

"And," said Lord Malvern, "is Maria so deeply interested in the affair, and yet ignorant of the measure till now?"

"Till now!" said Maria, with a smile not quite unqualified by regret and surprise: "I am as ignorant of the meaning of it now as ever."

"I am sure," said Mrs. Burford, "you may rely implicitly on my judgment in the affair."

"It is not," said Lord Malvern, "to force her into a marriage against her inclinations? if it is, Maria, resist — that is my doctrine, dutiful or undutiful. This week is to be marked in the kalends of my life, and in the annals of my family, as one in which an amiable, kind-hearted girl is sacrificed. I trust it is not to be distinguished in my recollection, by the horrors of a double sacrifice."

"I assure you, Lord Malvern," said Mrs. Burford, smiling, "I have not the slightest intention of exerting my authority in that way."

Now of all turns that the conversation could possibly have taken, this was the one of all others most desirable to be avoided. Burford felt his ears tingle; his mother exchanged looks with him, expressive of the misdirection of the debate; and Maria, scarcely knowing why, blushed deeply.

"Well, now then," said his lordship, "tell me why

do you go? and Burford, why did you not tell me this before to-day?"

"Why," said Burford, "I honestly confess the subject was a painful one, and I thought it best to let my mother open it herself."

"Are you pleased," said Lord Malvern, to Maria, "with the idea of going off to England, and so suddenly?"

Here was a question — what would she say?

"I am not accustomed," said Miss Burford, "to such sudden determinations; I confess it has taken me a good deal by surprise."

"When do you purpose starting?" said Lord Malvern.

"Either to-morrow or the next day at farthest," said Mrs. Burford.

"Oh, not to-morrow!" said Lord Malvern; "one day's reprieve."

"We cannot well go to-morrow, mamma," said Maria, chiming in discordantly, to her mother's ears, with his lordship.

"We shall see, dear," answered Mrs. Burford.

"How do you travel? Where do you mean to sleep on the road? What servants do you take?" said Lord Malvern.

"Why, my lord," said Mrs. Burford, "we travel very humbly. I think the Diligence will have the 'honour' of conveying us to Calais."

"No, no," said Lord Malvern; "if you *are* really obliged to go, and seriously mean to go, you go with me. I have no tie to Paris, when your establishment is broken up. Charles and I can sit ourselves down wherever we please. I fixed myself here because I found myself happy; as for the place itself, I detest it — at least I do *now*. I shall be just as comfortable travelling as staying still; and therefore we will make a 'tour' as far as the coast — cross I shall not. But as it turns out, it will be exceedingly convenient for the arrangement of my father's business; for, as Charles knows, his lawyer *must* see me before the settlements for his new marriage can be completed, and I had mentioned Paris as the place of rendezvous. Calais will be of course infinitely more agreeable to

the man of business — a mere ten hours' affair from London — and there I can do all that is necessary; and if you like to take Charles on to town with you, I can wait and pass my time very agreeably either at Calais or Boulogne till his return."

This was an unexpected *coup*. The only person of the party whose eyes brightened at the proposition was Maria's; who, as the affair was to be undertaken, why, she could not yet guess, was well enough pleased at converting a tedious journey in a heavy day-and-night-going-diligence, into an agreeable excursion in agreeable society.

Burford said nothing, because he could not see any very tenable objection to the scheme. — Mrs. Burford, like her son, was at fault.

"If you don't agree to this proposition, Mrs. Burford," continued Lord Malvern, "it will perfectly convince me that I am right in my suspicions, and that you are actually flying from your home to escape my worrying and boring society. If that be really the case, tell me so, and I will spare you all the trouble and inconvenience of moving. It would cost me a double pang — first, to think that I had already annoyed you so long, and, secondly, to think I should have made myself so odious."

"Oh! Lord Malvern," said Maria, in the naturalness of her heart, and really believing that her mother was behaving very rudely, "how can you think *that?*"

Mrs. Burford's blood tingled; another demonstration — how could it be helped? well — what was to be done?

"I think," said Burford, "our tour ought to be pursued in another direction ——"

"My dear fellow," said Lord Malvern, "you know as well as I, that it cannot be pursued in *any* direction, till I hear from Lord Snowdon's man of business. Common sense, common reason tell you, that I shall save him and my father a vast deal of trouble and expense, by meeting him more than half way. And if we are to travel for health and recreation, surely we may mingle worldly convenience in our pursuits; and although the road from Paris to Calais presents no great novelty, we shall ourselves make the novelty of converting a double journey of neces-

sity, into a double journey of enjoyment and economy. Was there ever such a union of advantages produced? It is so seldom that reason and pleasure post the same road, that I hail the combination with delight."

"My dear lord," said Mrs. Burford, "I must entreat you to banish from your mind any idea of your having *gêné*d or inconvenienced us. I think, perhaps we shall worry and inconvenience you by adopting your plan."

"How?" interrupted Lord Malvern, "not in the least — it cannot; on the contrary — so now not another word, I will hear no more — the arrangement rests with me — on the morning after to-morrow, my carriage shall be here at the door ready for packing."

"Indeed! I ——" said Mrs. Burford.

"No, neither deed nor word," said Lord Malvern: "I only appeal to Maria, whether my proposal is not perfectly rational, and unless you have decided that I am unbearable for three or four days longer, the most advantageous to all parties."

"Maria is no judge of the importance of the business which calls us away," said Mrs. Burford, who, caught in her own trap, was now forced to England, whither in point of fact she did not mean to go; her only object being to break up the party, and perhaps establish herself at Abbeville, or at one of the sea-ports.

"I confess I see no objection to Lord Malvern's proposal," said Burford, to his mother's infinite astonishment; an astonishment which, however, afterwards, when they were alone, he explained away. The fact was, that he saw the impossibility of further contesting the question without actually affronting his friend; and, if that were not the alternative, the choice of evils was confined to making the question one of importance, which it naturally was not, and which it must have derived from some circumstance connected with it, into a discussion of which, it was of course impossible to enter. It was, therefore, Burford's policy to accede to the proposition, as being unquestionably the safest, best, and most expeditious mode of carrying his mother's judicious scheme into effect. The circumstance of the journey insured them from the dan-

gerous consequences of a chance *tête-à-tête* between Maria and the dreaded lover, while the varying scenery and subjects which would come under their observation during the journey would furnish plenty of materials for conversation, and the hurry and bustle of the whole expedition would divert the mind of the young lord from the object upon which even Burford himself began seriously to apprehend it had fixed itself.

Mrs. Burford did not stop to argue with her son, nor could she enlarge upon the subject, or question his motives for so readily agreeing to the excursion; it was sufficient for her to know that he had his reasons, which were probably founded upon a more intimate knowledge than she could be supposed to possess of the character and disposition of his friend and pupil.

"I find," said she, "that I am left in a glorious minority of one upon this question, and therefore I shall not trouble the house with any farther division."

"That's right, my dear lady," said Lord Malvern. "I feel myself now in authority — I am the leader of a party; and that is what my illustrious father, with all his anxiety to be so, never yet has been. You are all pledged to me: I have the regulation of every thing; and even if in some things I may appear to err in judgment, it is one of the established principles of partisanship, that the followers should sacrifice their own opinions upon minor points, even if they do not at the instant see their object or bearing, believing them, in the implicitness of their confidence in their leader, to be, if *he* thinks so, the wisest and most favourable as conducive to the ulterior objects in view."

"I am sure," said Mrs. Burford, "with what *you* suggest, and Charles agrees in, I ought to be satisfied."

"'What Cato did, and Addison approv'd,
Cannot be wrong!'"

exclaimed Lord Malvern; "so said Eustace Budgell, when, according to his biographers, he committed a double murder; for they write in his life, or rather of his death, that having taken a wherry at Somerset House, he ordered the waterman to *shoot* London Bridge, and while the man

was obeying his orders, he jumped into the river and *drowned* himself."

"Poor Budgell," said Burford, "like many other wiser and better men he is not answerable for the absurdities of his biographers; however, as far as my vote goes in the present question, Lord Malvern has it."

"Has it," said Lord Malvern, "to be sure he has; and henceforth be mine all the charge and care of every thing connected with the expedition. Excepting to afford us her countenance, Mrs. Burford shall have no share in the proceedings; and as for Maria and her brother, their duty shall be thus divided, wherever we dine; he shall say a grace, and she shall look on; for be it known I travel slowly. I shall be anxious to hear about Hester's marriage, and whither they are gone; for Charles," said his lordship, "by the time we reach Calais, they will have departed from London to spend the honeymoon."

The tone in which this was spoken, the manner in which it was addressed to Burford, and the expression of the young lord's countenance, startled Mrs. Burford, and brought the blood into her son's cheeks. The old lady had heard Charles speak in terms of the highest admiration of Lady Hester, but admiration unmixed with any more tender feeling; and it struck her as peculiarly odd, that Lord Malvern, in referring to her marriage, should seem to associate Burford with his sister in a recollection of what was so soon to occur, which ought not, and could not, as she naturally supposed, affect him in any way, but as an event happening in his patron's family at which he ought to rejoice.

"As to the happiness of the new married couple," said Lord Malvern, "I don't intend to discuss it, for I hate to express a hope which I despair of seeing realised; and as for *you*, I am sure I won't ask *you* to give an opinion on the subject."

"Lord Malvern," said Burford, really overcome by the attack so little expected, and which seemed to have originated in the *abandon* which Lord Malvern had given to his spirits, at being appointed captain of the caravan to

Calais, "whatever may conduce to Lady Hester's happiness or ——"

"There, there," said his lordship, "do not preach Charles — it is all hypocrisy. My dear Mrs. Burford," continued he, "this son of yours is a most extraordinary person: all I wish is, that he had been a little more candid, and a little less diffident, and I ——"

"My dear Malvern," said Burford, "pray consider."

"Consider! I do," said his lordship, "and the more I consider the more I regret. However, as that is past praying for, so is it past preaching about; and let us occupy — or rather let me — for you — no none of ye, are to interfere — my thoughts in arranging my plan; — when must you be in London, Mrs. Burford?"

This was an unlucky question, for as she had no business whatever in that city, it was difficult at the moment to settle upon what day it was absolutely necessary she should do nothing: she looked at her son — for having once conceded to his views upon the subject of the expedition, she thought it best to leave the settlement of the time which it was to occupy equally to his judgment.

"Why" said Burford, as much puzzled as his respectable parent, "I should think — about ——"

"Well, well, said Lord Malvern, "I want no secrets; any time in the course of next week will do, I suppose. As for Maria and I, we seem to be entirely excluded from the sanhedrin; however, we know our duty, and will do it."

There was something so entirely new in Lord Malvern's manner — a gaiety almost amounting to wildness, mixed with an occasional tenderness, when Maria spoke, or when she was named, and an ease and readiness in the way in which he spoke to her and of her as "Maria," which particularly struck Burford and his mother. Yet what could they do? He asked "Maria" to sing — could they hinder her? He challenged her to her *revanche* at chess, as he had promised — could they prevent her accepting it? And now that they had done all they could to break off the intimacy, could they, with any thing like decency or feeling, refuse to agree in the plan he had proposed for maintaining

it for three or four days longer? These were the perplexities in which they were involved; and, as has already been observed, it would have been distressing and indelicate, in the highest degree, to have done — what perhaps a mother with a baser mind might have been induced to do — put Maria upon her guard against encouraging a passion which might be hopeless, because the very caution presupposed a disposition which probably did not exist, and which the poor young lady could only have fancied had evinced itself by her manner towards their guest.

Another of those lumps of sugar in the shape of happy quiet evenings, in such a circle, had melted, and Lord Malvern retired, if not to bed, at least to his room, to concert with his valet — a most active and intelligent servant — all the measures necessary for the agreeable undertaking which he was now fully empowered to organise and direct. Maria remained with her mother and brother, and, to her surprise, though clearly to her conviction, placed a restraint upon their conversation, such as she had never been conscious of before. Her mother gazed on her with a peculiar sort of solicitude; and Burford, conscious what had attracted this particular attention, was on the point of breaking the silence which affection and propriety had hitherto imposed. The same cause operated upon both mother and son, for they had both seen, in their lynx-like watchfulness, a look of Lord Malvern s, during the game of chess, which convinced them that the unconscious girl was an object of the tenderest interest to him. What cruelty would it have been to enlighten her upon this point, and how imperiously their duty commanded them to separate them. It was the discussion of this point, and the consideration of the wisdom and prudence of the line they had now actually adopted, upon which they wished to enter; but while the dear object of their anxiety was present, it was impossible to debate the question in which she was so vitally concerned.

When the opportunity at length arrived, and Maria retired to rest, Mrs. Burford and her son agreed that no other course could be pursued with a better chance of successful results than that which they had determined to

adopt; and, accordingly, they agreed to direct their attention during the journey to three points. One, the acceleration of their movements; the second, the avoidance of any conversation which could lead to the point most sedulously to be shunned; and the third, the prevention of any *tête-à-tête* between the principal parties implicated. With a careful eye to all these prudential precautions, the guardians of youthful happiness resolved that the journey might — as indeed now it must — be undertaken without any fear of consequences.

In the morning, Lord Malvern appeared an altered being: his eyes beamed brightly; his countenance looked cheerful; and he seemed to have forgotten all his own sorrows, in the effort to make his friends comfortable on the journey, from which — as, *in fact*, it was to lead to his separation from the object in which he was now so deeply interested — he appeared to anticipate some results not clearly definable to either of his "guardians," and which, let it be what it might, thanks to their scrupulous attention to what was going on, were not in the least degree likely to occur.

The morning, however, brought a letter, which added a new reason for Burford's making the journey, not only to Calais, but further. It was a letter from some official authority in England, requiring him forthwith to take possession of the living of Silgrove, to which he had been preferred, and to make the necessary arrangements for occupying the parsonage attached to it, and performing sundry other duties, the fulfilment of which, it was quite clear, was essential not only to his perfect establishment in his right, but to the profit of the person who made the communication.

"Nothing can be more convenient," said Lord Malvern, "the fates for once conspire favourably. You must show your mother the parsonage. I know it well, and have, when a boy, passed many a happy hour under its roof. Charles is not a marrying man, I think," added his lordship, "and I should not be surprised to find you, Mrs. Burford, established there."

"I am not quite so selfish. Lord Malvern," said Mrs.

Burford, "as to wish to usurp the place which may be destined for another."

"No, but till that other is found?" said Lord Malvern.

"Which will be some time, depend upon it," rejoined Burford.

"I remember the parsonage at Silgrove," said Miss Burford; "I dined there once, several years ago, when I was staying at Lionsden with Lady Hester. I never saw a more desirable residence."

"You were, then, at Lionsden, Maria," said Lord Malvern; "which, now, for comfort, should you prefer — the palace or the parsonage?"

"To *my* mind, and with *my* means," said Maria, "I prefer the latter. I can feel and understand the happiness which may be rationally enjoyed in such a house, but my mind is not sufficiently exalted to appreciate all the delights of the other."

"Then Lionsden would have no charms for you?" said his lordship. "Suppose my father, instead of fixing his attentions upon the gay and flippant Miss Oldham, had been attracted to the milder radiance of the gentle, unaffected Maria Burford, what ——"

"Ah, Lord Malvern," said Mrs. Burford, "how can you put such a case to the poor child?"

"It *is* foolish," replied his lordship; "if she said 'yes,' I should regret it; if she said 'no,' I suppose I ought to be offended for my illustrious parent's sake. For *my* part, I think the union of the castle and the cottage might have been a very advantageous one."

Burford corrected the tone which Lord Malvern's conversation was assuming, by a look expressive of his promise not to revert to that subject again.

"Well, Mrs. Burford," said his lordship, "I would advise you, when this young lady *is* married, to betake yourself to Silgrove: you will be near *us* — we shall be near you; and I cannot imagine a happier relief from all the glare of grandeur, the blaze of lights, and the turmoil of company, than a repetition of our calm and quiet evenings of the *Allée des Veuves*."

This speech was so curiously worded, implied so very

much, and, probably, meant so very little, that Mrs. Burford thought it better to let it pass off without an observation. If she expressed any incredulity as to her daughter's marriage, it would lead to something, perhaps, serious in the way of protestation; if she declared that there was no prospect of such an event, it would look as if she sought for an opportunity to declare that her daughter was free and uninfluenced, and ready to receive the addresses of the man whose affections she was most anxious she should not gain.

It was a great relief to Mrs. Burford when she could escape from this conversation, and carry off her daughter, who hitherto wholly unaccustomed to constraint, and in the habit of being left to her own amusements and employments, could not conceive why she was now never permitted beyond the length of her mother's apron-string; and, to say truth, it was little less disagreeable than inexplicable: for, without a thought or wish beyond the simple gratification which a well-educated, highly-gifted young woman naturally enjoys in the society of men like her brother and their guest, she felt that she should be much more happy and better amused if permitted to remain, as she had ever before been wont to do, to participate in the amusements of the morning, but which, for the last two or three days, she had been, as if accidentally, hindered from doing, and which, on this last day of their stay in Paris, was wholly put a stop to by the preparations for their departure on the following morning.

Lord Malvern was delighted that Burford was obliged to cross the Channel by his own business. He had begun to feel that he could not endure to think of Maria being set adrift in a steam-packet, with no other protector than her mother. It was impossible to calculate upon the sort of passengers who might go over with them; and men might be rude and uncivil to her, which would be terrible; or they might be extremely kind and civil to her, which he thought would be a great deal worse. Her brother would be so proper a guardian — and so safe too; and then Burford would see his noble father, and could bring him news of his much-loved sister; and, in short, it

really appeared as if the fates were inclined to compensate him for all his past misfortunes, if, as he said, an escape from a flirt and a coquet, like Elizabeth Oldham, might be called a misfortune.

His lordship occupied a considerable part of the morning in making arrangements and purchases in Paris, and returned, for the last time, to the house which his fancy had magnified into a palace — or rather a paradise. His evening, however, was destined to be less agreeable than usual, for poor Maria, who felt no ill, either bodily or mental, was forced to bed at nine o'clock, on the plea, not of having fatigued herself during that day, but because she would have a great deal of fatigue to undergo on the following one.

The reason for her retiring, if Mrs. Burford had known the whole programme of the expedition, was just as good, as regarded the present day, as it was likely to be efficient with respect to the toils of the next; for Lord Malvern who had despatched his courier *en avant* to secure beds and accommodations on the road, had declared himself incapable of a long journey, and divided the *trajet* so as to make their arrival at Calais the termination of the third day.

Whether Mrs. Burford or her son would have entered any very serious protest against this moderated rate of proceeding, had they been made aware of his lordship's intention, it is impossible to say, but so it was. Nor were they permitted even to discuss the subject until after they had, for some hours, lost sight of the *Allée des Veuves*, and the golden dome of the *Invalids*, and were, to their infinite surprise, safely housed for the night at the ***Ecu de France***, in the ancient town of Beauvais.

CHAPTER X.

AGREEABLE as the dilatoriness of the travellers may be, at least to one of the party, the reader must not linger upon the road; he must be hurried on in advance, in order to catch a glimpse of the appearance of affairs in Grosvenor Square on the day of the intended wedding.

The paternal solicitude of Lord Snowdon was considerably relieved by the opinion of the physicians; but it must be confessed, that his parental anger was very much increased by the same cause. Both the doctors, eminent in their line, had pronounced the disorder mental. They could perceive no bodily ill, which was not of a temporary nature, and evidently resulting from an affection of the mind. To have seen his daughter die would have wounded the marquess's proud heart, but to believe, to be convinced that she had suffered her affections to be won without his consent, or that the struggle she had ineffectually made to obey his wishes and marry the man of his choice, was caused by a conflict in her bosom between love and duty, was more acutely cutting to his feelings.

It was not so much the loss of Lord Elmsdale, which he now looked upon as certain — although that was something — it was not the probable interference of the events of the day with his own approaching marriage — it was not the disclosure to himself of his daughter's concealment of some former attachment — no one of these was it that wrung him to the heart and stung him to the quick. No; as the surgeons tell us, the sense of bodily pain lies in the epidermis, so did the sensitiveness of Lord Snowdon inhabit the surface: the deep wound he felt not, it was when the skin was scratched that he winced; and neither the total change which the event might produce in his arrangements, nor the agony his daughter suffered, nor the disappointment that her lover might endure, hurt him half so much as the certainty that the "town" would know all the particulars; that the newspapers, instead of proclaiming the *éclât* of the

"wedding," would have to declare its lamentable discomfiture; that Rumour, with her hundred tongues, would be busy in discovering causes, and ascribing reasons for the overthrow of his hopes and expectations; and that like those of the Lionsden *fête*, the proceedings of the day had turned out a failure of the most ridiculous and unusual, if not unprecedented character.

And then he recollected the accounts (by anticipation) which he had himself written for publication in the newspapers: if they appeared, they would only be inserted to provoke a general contradiction. No bishop graced the half-performed ceremony, which broke down in the hands of a tyro curate. No *déjeûner* was served on the gold plate; there was no bride to change her costume; no horses were brought from Lord Elmsdale's celebrated stud to draw the new and elegant travelling chariot, which, instead of conveying the happy couple to spend the honeymoon, left the disunited lovers behind, and was dragged back to the stables whence it came.

Swift says, "pride or ambition often puts men upon doing the meanest things; so climbing is performed in the same posture as creeping." Lord Snowdon, now that his scheme of self-puffing (much more common in his lordship's sphere than common people imagine) had met with so signal a defeat, looked back with shame and regret upon his performances in that way. To stop the publication of his own reports would be to betray their author; for if he claimed them from the journals to which they had been addressed, he must, of course, support the claim in his own character. This worried him; for although it seemed pretty clear that the truth would naturally find circulation through the press, even before the next morning, he anticipated seeing the account of what had been intended, published side by side with the detail of what had actually occurred, illustrated, no doubt, by the piquant remarks of the editor.

Lady Hester, according to the advice of the medical men, continued in bed, and Miss Everingham remained by her side. She spoke little, and appeared to find relief only in tears, which she shed abundantly. Her father periodi-

cally inquired after her, but, at the suggestion of the physicians, made no effort to see her. Lady Katharine and Miss Oldham, after a short and very unsatisfactory interview with the marquess, who took less pains than usual to conceal his displeasure at their extremely thoughtless conduct — to call it by no harsher name — quitted town for Richmond, attended by Cornet Richardson, and his friend Mr. Losh, an estimate of whose character and qualifications may be pretty fairly made from the knowledge of the fact, that he was the toady and "double" of the cornet — the monkey of the ape — the shadow of the shade.

There was one person of the party, one actor in the play, whose situation appeared by far more painful than that of any other — Lord Elmsdale himself; — he was left in the most awkward possible position. Lord Snowdon had begged him not to quit the house: he had not courage to meet him — he hoped to hear something of Lady Hester that he might communicate to him — something consolatory. But what consolation could he offer? he had been told authoritatively, that his daughter's disease was in the mind; he had seen the shuddering repulse which she had given to Lord Elmsdale's attentions. How was he to temporise, what was he to do?

At length he summoned sufficient resolution to see the unfortunate peer, who appeared almost stupified by the embarrassing nature of his situation. The marquess lamented deeply the unfortunate circumstance of his daughter's illness — the physicians assured him that it was but a temporary affection — a few days, he trusted, would set all to rights; indeed, he hoped, that in the course of the evening, she might be sufficiently well to admit of their seeing her. That he had himself abstained from visiting her, lest she might be too much agitated. That he thought as the sad interruption to the ceremony would, no doubt, be the subject of general conversation and remark, it would be well if the earl and he were to show themselves in the streets together: it would have the "effect" of contradicting any absurd rumours, and show the town, that the *contretemps* of the morning had only delayed for a short

time the event from which they all hoped to derive so much happiness.

Lord Elmsdale, who was as shy as his intended father-in-law was proud, deceived as he was in the early part of the conversation, by the account which his lordship gave of the nature and character of Lady Hester's illness, felt pleased at the proposition which the marquess made, not only as it was likely to produce the anticipated effect, but as giving him some support and countenance in a very awkward position. He did not like the idea of even leaving the house alone, after so extraordinary a repulse; and coinciding as he did, in the general view which the marquess took, readily acceded to the proposal of walking down to Downing Street, where the marquess said he had merely to say three words to a certain person, but while he was there, he would take the opportunity of explaining the affair of the morning, in order to put it on a right footing in a high quarter, where it might otherwise have a bad "effect."

By this scheme, Lord Snowdon thought entirely to stop the idle babblers of the *pavé*, and establish, in the bow window of White's, the fact, that although something had happened, every thing was *en train*, and going on smoothly.

Contrast this effective promenade, and all its studied frivolity, with the torture of poor Lady Hester's mind; compare the dignified stride of her noble father along the *trottoir* of St. James's Street, with the agonised writhings of his miserable daughter on her couch of sorrow. She, who cared nothing for effect, remembered with dread and terror the sensations which overcame her when she sank lifeless on the earth, and when the triumph of her feelings over the artificial customs of society had made her the subject of general conversation and remark. She, who shrank from the public gaze, and sought in the privacy of retirement that peace of mind which it seemed destined she was never to enjoy, felt all the misery of her situation pressing upon her with a weight which she thought herself scarcely able to resist.

To the solicitude of Miss Everingham she was indebted for all the support and consolation she had received. That

her father had not visited her, she knew was by order of the physicians. Miss Oldham and Lady Katharine had been excluded under the same veto; "they would come to her when she was better." Better! of what? — she suffered no ill that time or medicine could cure. At her age and with her general health, a few days, a few hours, might restore her bodily strength; — but to what was she to be restored? a renewal of Lord Elmsdale's suit — a repetition of the yet unfinished ceremonial.

"Better," said she to Miss Everingham, "better I should die. If I live, I live to eternal wretchedness, or I provoke my father's anger, and incur his curse. Never, never, shall I forget the horrors of this morning. I felt so resolved, so firm, so determined to overcome all selfish feelings, to conquer feelings for others, which my poor heart tells me are not selfish; and to do my duty, my first earthly duty, to my father. Why was it I failed? it all seemed like a dream, like a vision; I only awoke to the reality, when I was asked that question upon which my fate depended. I felt my heart throb, my throat swell, a sudden darkness came over my eyes, and all I recollect is, finding myself in your arms, and in the care of a physician. Do you think, Anne," continued she, raising herself in bed, "will they force me to go through that again?"

"Compose yourself, dear child," said Miss Everingham; "no — no — it cannot be: you have evinced so strong a feeling, that if Lord Elmsdale have any feeling himself, he will not think of persisting in his suit."

"Ay, Anne," said Lady Hester, "but my father — what will *he* say? — how will *he* determine? It is not what Lord Elmsdale wishes; if my father continues fixed in his determination, he will insist upon the fulfilment of Lord Elmsdale's engagement. I know him, and I know his spirit — he will not endure what he might conceive an indignity. Oh! Anne, perhaps there may be blood shed for me — perhaps my father's blood! Save me from this, spare me, tell me only that there is a chance or risk of his safety, and I will to-morrow kneel again, and pledge myself to all the duties of a wife."

"My dear Lady Hester," said Miss Everingham, "you

are conjuring up ills which never are likely to occur; — your father and Lord Elmsdale are together — they are gone out together — he dines here."

"True, true, Anne," said Lady Hester, "but this is all in the supposition that I am yet to be his wife; there is the condition upon which tranquillity will be established. Would to Heaven Alfred were here! in *him* I should have a friend, an advocate — and yet, if *he* came — ah — there it is — there it is — how foolish — how wicked I have been. I have sinned deeply, for I have deceived my father — yes, Anne, I have spoken falsely to him, else this would not have happened; — and yet, when I said my heart was free, I meant to conquer every feeling by which it was actuated. I have struggled hard — indeed — indeed I have; I thought I had triumphed over our worst of enemies — self; — I have failed in the effort — the ordeal proved me, and showed me my own infirmity."

"This violence of grief must not be indulged in," said Miss Everingham; "you have nothing with which to reproach yourself — the denial of an attachment which you had resolved to conquer was no falsehood; you conceived it past, and at all events, knowing the violence of Lord Snowdon's disposition, you gave him the strongest earnest of your sincerity, by agreeing to his proposal for Lord Elmsdale. There is nothing in this to occasion regret or remorse. It will be seen how he will act now. If the opportunity occurs, I shall not hesitate to impress upon his mind my view of the course a man ought to pursue in such a case, if, indeed, after what has passed, a suggestion can be necessary."

"But then ——"

"I must insist upon your keeping quiet," said Miss Everingham; "the only condition on which I will remain here is, that you will neither speak nor agitate yourself."

"Speak!" said Lady Hester, "can I command my thoughts?"

"No, but the expression of your feelings wears and harasses you," said Miss Everingham. "Collect yourself — it will be perhaps expected that I should dine at table

to-day: if I do, I will give you a full report of what occurs; and above all, I am anxious to be there, in order to postpone your father's visit to you till to-morrow."

"I could not bear his reproaches to-night," said Lady Hester.

"It is better to let his feelings moderate," said Miss Everingham, "although, if I know him, he appears at present more mortified than angry — he thinks the delay in the marriage inconvenient, but ——"

"Delay," said Lady Hester, "there it is — that word delay speaks volumes."

"He thinks it so," replied Miss Everingham, "but I should be much surprised, if Lord Elmsdale can consider it in any other light than a termination to the affair."

The conversation was here interrupted by a message from Lord Snowdon, who had returned from his excursion, and begged to see Miss Everingham. Of her he made the most anxious inquiries about Lady Hester; and Miss Everingham, extremely anxious that the case should appear as little severe as possible, pronounced her opinion, that perfect quiet was all that was necessary to restore her, that the shock her feelings had encountered was a severe one, but that she hoped by the morning she would be able, as she was most anxious, to see the marquess.

Lord Snowdon knew, as well as Miss Everingham, the cause of his daughter's illness, and of the exhibition in the morning. Of the object of her choice he had not the slightest notion — it was not his policy to attempt to find out — it was not his design to affect to doubt her speedy convalescence: hence his calm and placid demeanour, hence the tender message to his child. He found that Lord Elmsdale had fallen into the belief in which he desired to fix him — that her indisposition was temporary, and wholly unconnected with the ceremony, farther than that, perhaps, the awfulness and importance of the obligation which it imposed, and the consequences resulting from the answer she was required to give, might have affected her, more especially when the trepidation of the "duncish curate," as his lordship called him, in putting the question,

naturally infected the innocent girl who was to reply to it with a corresponding timidity.

Lord Elmsdale, who considered the fulfilment of the engagement a matter of duty rather than inclination, agreed to all the marquess's suggestions, and the more readily, because, although not a devoted studier of effect, like the marquess, he could not help feeling that he should look very ridiculous, if the affair finally terminated as it now had "*re infecta*." Thus it was that, to the infinite satisfaction of the marquess, the "gentle automaton" performed his part in the domestic drama with the most imperturbable placidity.

Fire may be produced from ice, and it certainly appeared that Miss Everingham had resolved that it should not be her fault if the "dish of skimmed milk" was not curdled. Seizing an opportunity, of which the marquess, who, although he dreaded her influence over his daughter, did not imagine she would avail herself, she sought the much damaged bridegroom in the drawing-room, where she found him sitting by himself, waiting the completion of the marquess's somewhat elaborated toilet, for his reappearance before dinner.

It would be uselessly occupying the time of the reader to detail the conversation which occurred between his lordship and the matured virgin, if conversation that may be called, in which one party only spoke and the other assented. She had made up her mind, without consulting Lady Hester, upon the course she would pursue, and in fulfilment of her resolution, stated all the real circumstances of the case — the dread that Lady Hester had of giving him pain, her grateful acknowledgment for the preference which he had shown her, her entire esteem for him, her anxiety for his friendship, and the utter impossibility of her returning his love.

"But why," said his lordship, in his peculiar lisping whisper, inaudible at two yards' distance, "why not have told me so herself?"

"She dreaded the anger of her father," said Miss Everingham.

"Ah, well!" said his lordship, "do *you* know, that is

the very thing about which I am so apprehensive even now."

"I trust entirely to your honour, Lord Elmsdale," said Miss Everingham, "not to betray her even at this juncture; — if it were possible for the marquess to believe, that her disinclination not to your lordship, but to marriage, arose from her affection for another, the consequences would be most serious."

"Do I know the person to whom she is attached?" said Lord Elmsdale, with such infinite *naïveté*, as completely to astonish Miss Everingham.

"I cannot say," said Miss Everingham, "*I* most certainly do not. I admit that I have my suspicions — yet I have never heard her name him. But now recollect, Lord Elmsdale, how entirely I trust you: I am sure it is better to be explicit; but a word tending to excite the marquess's suspicions ——"

"Oh, dear no," said his lordship, "of course I shall take care of that; but I think I may venture as far as expressing my own: because if I don't give some sort of reason he will, of course, expect me to conclude my engagement when Lady Hester recovers; and, I — I'm sure I admire her very much, and she is very charming; and I appreciate her, and all that: but I certainly would not inconvenience her — that is, I mean, I would not make her unhappy by forcing her into a marriage against her inclinations for all the world — that, you know, would be the height of folly."

"I am glad to find you so ready to enter into my views," said Miss Everingham, who saw, in every moment she conversed with him, and heard, in every word he uttered, fresh justifications of Lady Hester's dislike.

"It will be so awkward," continued the sapient earl, whose merits never really appeared, until drawn out by important business, "about the carriages — and the plate —and all the things—the preparations—and then I shall look so very ridiculous to all my people and connexions— that's what— I ——"

"Any thing is better, surely," said Miss Everingham, "than beginning a long life of continual unhappiness?"

To be sure, yes," replied his lordship, "only I think, perhaps — if Lady Hester — now that every thing is settled — if she could but make up her mind — I don't see why we might not be very happy; my place in the north is very retired and quiet — and — I — however, if you think — I am sure you have known her longer than I have, and are better able to judge ——"

"I am quite decided in my opinion," said Miss Everingham.

"Ah, then," said his lordship, "of course it is of no use arguing" — as if he ever did argue — "I must, of course, make the best of it. I suppose I had better come to an understanding with the marquess this evening?"

"If you agree with me, certainly," said Miss Everingham.

"Oh, I do perfectly agree with you," said his lordship; "nothing can be clearer — only I wish I had known it before — that's all. When I have made up my mind to any thing, I hate to be disappointed, if it is ever so trifling."

Miss Everingham looked at him, but he did not see the expression of *her* face, for he was looking at his own in the glass over the fire-place, and settling the arrangement of his stock.

"I hope," added the eloquent pleader, "that I have made you understand dear Lady Hester's feelings?"

"Oh, perfectly," said Lord Elmsdale.

"I mean," continued Miss Everingham, "I have, I hope, taught you to appreciate the delicacy of her position, and her sensitive apprehension lest she should offend you by ——"

"Oh, dear no," said Lord Elmsdale, "I think she is quite right. Nothing could be more foolish, as you say — no — only — I — I must see about it. I had better, perhaps, leave town and write to the marquess. I am not a very good hand at a letter — but I have a friend who, I think, would help me; — but then — then it would look so odd going out of town to spend the honeymoon without one's bride — wouldn't it?"

"No, I would *speak* to Lord Snowdon," said Miss

Everingham, "and I am sure if you do, the point will be settled."

"I am sure of that too," said Lord Elmsdale, "but then I am not quite so sure how; if I knew that — I — at all events, Lady Hester shall not be annoyed on my account."

"She will bless you a thousand times, Lord Elmsdale, when I tell her this," said Miss Everingham, quite delighted with having worked her companion into an expression of something like feeling.

"I'm sure she's very kind," said his lordship, with a coldness and calmness that would rather have suited the acknowledgment of a bow than a benediction.

"I shall tell her all you say," said the kind friend, "and she will sleep the better."

"I'm very glad you think so," said the phlegmatic peer.

Miss Everingham timed her attack with great judgment, for she had scarcely carried her point with the noble lord, when the marquess arrived in the drawing-room. He appeared calm, but looked pale, and was evidently suffering much annoyance. He was vexed that the Oldhams had not staid in town to dinner; he had read a long account of the failure of the marriage in the evening papers, headed "*Extraordinary circumstance;*" he had received a note from Downing Street; and a letter from the Bishop of Dorchester, excusing himself for not being able to perform the marriage ceremony, and explaining, that the marquess's letter had not reached him at his palace, he having been absent on a tour of confirmations: the epistle concluded with a pious anticipation of Lady Hester's happiness, an eulogium upon her merits and virtues, and a prospective view of the domestic felicity of Lord and Lady Elmsdale. All these things were mingled in his mind; and although he inquired after his daughter, his solicitude was not marked with the tenderness which, to her alone of all his connexions, he usually adopted.

Dinner was announced—and any thing more melancholy than the meal was, perhaps, never seen. It was quite impossible that any one of the three persons at table could

rally. The marquess felt that he could have almost endured the senseless rattle of that invaluable addition to a cherry-tree in the fruit season, Lady Katharine Oldham, in preference to the gloomy silence which pervaded the dinner-room. The attending servants felt it part of their duty to look grave, and many a funeral "baked meat" feast has shone more gaily than this select banquet on the occasion of Lord Elmsdale's half-finished marriage.

Lord Elmsdale himself appeared dumb, and almost motionless, during the repast. He felt himself an object of ridicule even in the eyes of the marquess's menials; and, moreover, anticipated the task he had undertaken of coming to a decision in the course of the evening; convinced, as probably the reader also is, that the marquess would hold him to his bargain, and force his daughter into the performance of *her* part of the compact; his anxiety for its completion being greatly sharpened by the consciousness of a declaration made first to himself, and then to her, that he would not marry until she was established in the world. This rested in his heart and in his mind — "the Plinlimmons never broke a promise, made even to themselves."

Miss Everingham, very soon after the dessert was put down, excused herself on the plea of anxiety to see dear Lady Hester, and departed forthwith, not without receiving a most piteous look from the earl, as if imploring her to stay a little longer, and a request from the marquess to let him have an account of his dear Hester as speedily as possible.

"I wonder," said his lordship, "when she will be sufficiently recovered to bring this matter to a termination. It is a very curious thing to see how women are affected. Our family have no complaints — I mean no constitutional complaints; we die, like other people — that's true — but to all the common diseases of the world, in general, it seems we are not obnoxious."

"That is very curious," said Lord Elmsdale.

"Peculiar," said the marquess. "Not that these natural privileges are altogether confined to our blood; the Stuarts, certainly, had the inherent prerogative of curing disorders

by the touch; and we—as far as I can read—have never suffered from any ordinary malady. My great-uncle's grandfather's first cousin's sister died in the early part of George the First's reign of consumption; but then it was a very rare disorder — very few people, if any, had suffered by it; its subsequent prevalence is attributed by some to the general use of tea. I recollect hearing that King James the First once said to an ancestor of mine, the thirteenth Baron Malvern, that tobacco was an invention of the devil himself; but, for *my* part, I think the introduction of tea as injurious to the health as the other is unpleasant to the senses."

This brief disquisition was intended to establish in that, which the gentle automaton was pleased to consider his mind, that the indisposition of Lady Hester was altogether bodily.

"I don't dislike a cigar, myself," said his lordship, a saying which was received with a look of ineffable contempt from his exalted companion.

"I think it must have been the chilliness of the air in the church," said Lord Snowdon, "immediately after the hurry and excitement of our progress, that affected my poor child."

"I dare say it was," said Lord Elmsdale.

"And yet the weather is not very cold yet."

"No, certainly not," said the earl.

A servant entered the room, and said that Miss Everingham had sent down word that Lady Hester seemed much better.

"If Sir Henry calls," said the marquess, "beg him to come to me after he has seen her ladyship. — I am glad to hear that."

"So am I," said Lord Elmsdale.

"It has been a sad blow upon us, Elmsdale," continued the marquess, "a very sad blow — a disappointment one could not have calculated upon. The evening papers give a very fair account of it; they make a sort of joke of the young parson's running away, and the old doctor's taking his place, which is low and vulgar, and might have been spared; but, for *my* part, I care nothing for what appears

in the newspapers. I suppose the people who write them get their accounts of weddings, and dinners, and balls, from our servants or their own spies. It can, however, make no difference to people in our sphere, and so I never interfere one way or another — it is quite beneath us."

"Oh, quite," said Lord Elmsdale, whose fashionable notoriety had not yet become at all troublesome to him.

"Well," said the marquess, "if wine can banish sorrow we have need of some — help yourself. I think it would be well, Elmsdale, to fix a day for the marriage, as soon as we can ascertain about Hester's health; the more speedily public gossip — not that I care for it in the slightest degree — is stopped, the better. We will hear what our excellent doctor says, if he comes, and regulate our proceedings accordingly."

"Yes, that will be the best way," said Lord Elmsdale, "or — perhaps — I — was thinking — of going out of town — if ——"

"Out of town, my dear fellow!" exclaimed the marquess, in a tone of familiarity quite surprising to his timid guest, "what on earth should you go out of town for?"

"To wait for Lady Hester's recovery," said the earl.

"Why, I trust, she will be quite well almost as soon as you could order horses to your carriage," said the marquess.

"I don't know — I — think probably not," said Lord Elmsdale.

"Have you seen the physicians?"

"Oh, dear no — no," said his lordship; "only I think it will require more time than perhaps you imagine to induce her to submit — I mean — consent — agree — in short I ——"

"My dear Elmsdale," said Lord Snowdon, "why you are dreaming; a lady may have a fainting fit on a Monday morning, and yet be at a ball on Monday evening. I don't go to see her, because they advise her being kept quiet; but three days will restore her, and I am anxious, because the St. Leonard's family are staying in town *exprès*."

"I really think," said the earl, looking serious, pale, and frightened, "that we ought not to hurry on the affair."

"What an extraordinary cautiousness on *your* part," said the marquess.

"I doubt," said the earl, "very much doubt, from what I have heard, whether Lady Hester will ever sufficiently recover to complete our marriage."

"Complete!" cried the marquess, "what do you mean by complete? — it is complete — perfectly complete — in every particular save one — its termination."

"Yes, but that is a very important particular," said the earl. "I dare say it may be cold — or it may be heat — or it may be fever — or it may be alarm — but it's very curious to me, that the attack should have reached its crisis just when the young lady was asked the leading question, upon which the whole gist of the ceremony turned."

"Do you imagine, Lord Elmsdale," said the marquess, "that the scene we witnessed this morning proceeded from any disinclination on the part of my daughter to accept you as her husband?"

"Why, now, to tell you the truth, my lord, I do," said the earl, in a sort of candid, conciliatory tone, which it is quite impossible to convey to the reader, but which seemed to imply, "There, now you have my opinion, and if you break my head for my ingenuousness I cannot help it."

"You astonish me!" said the marquess. "Can you believe so ill of a daughter of mine — of a daughter of my house, as to imagine she would carry matters so far, so disingenuously?"

"I do not accuse her of disingenuousness," said Lord Elmsdale; "on the contrary, I think she has never evinced the slightest affection for me — that I *must* say."

"Then might I ask, Lord Elmsdale," said the marquess, "what might have been your inducement to continue your attentions, and carry them to the extreme point?"

"I admire Lady Hester very much indeed," said Lord Elmsdale, who had never said so much in his life before, "and I felt convinced I could be happy with her; indeed

I think I could make myself very comfortable with any woman who was kind to me, if she felt so disposed — and so I went on; and seeing that you had entirely set your heart upon the match — and I ——"

"Me! Lord Elmsdale," exclaimed the marquess, "how do you mean that *I* had set my heart upon the match?"

"It struck me that you wished it particularly."

"For my daughter's sake I wished it," said the marquess; "that is, if she wished it too."

"Ah! that is exactly the point," replied Lord Elmsdale; "I am convinced she does *not* wish it. And I am quite sure — I speak from what I have seen in other cases — far as the matter has proceeded, I am sure if it were practicable, it would be a wise thing, even now, to break it off."

"Indeed! that is your opinion, my lord?" said the marquess; "and pray, sir, what hinders its being broken off?"

"That you must decide," said Lord Elmsdale; "as far as I am concerned, I repeat I think it would be wise to do so; but if it could be considered in any way casting a reflection upon your family ——"

"Upon *my* family, Lord Elmsdale!" cried the marquess: "how should *your* violation of a compact, sir, possibly injure my family?"

"I am not going to violate a compact," replied the earl, "on the contrary, I am ready to fulfil it; but I repeat, if it could be avoided, I am sure we should be consulting Lady Hester's happiness by adopting that course— I know it is too late now ——"

"My lord, it is by no means too late," said the marquess. "Do you imagine that I shall suffer my daughter to be taken from me, by a person expressing the sentiments you have just now broached? What grounds have you for supposing yourself disagreeable to her?"

"I have already said — the public have already seen," said the earl. "I imagine I cut a very ridiculous figure this morning! and I tell you, Lord Snowdon, in perfect sincerity of heart, that if the attempt to unite us was to be renewed, the scene of to-day would be repeated. She

dislikes me — she has convinced me of it — and although I have the highest regard and affection for her, I think it my duty to her and to myself, to you, and to all of us, to declare my opinion upon that point most clearly and unequivocally."

Lord Snowdon entirely agreed with Lord Elmsdale in his view of this part of the subject: he could not blame his child's taste, but the thing that puzzled his lordship was, how the gentle automaton had found out the fact. Who had been enlightening him? he had not been out of his sight above half an hour in the day, and that half hour he was in his own drawing-room — it struck him at last.

"You were in conversation with Miss Everingham, when I came into the drawing-room before dinner, Lord Elmsdale?" said the marquess.

"I was."

"I conclude that you gleaned from her the ideas which you have now adopted as your own?" said Lord Snowdon.

"I gleaned them from my own observation," said the earl; "and however much gratified and flattered I must be by having such a wife, if I could avert the evil, I would avoid the possession of her, if it were to make her miserable, which I am sure it would."

"You undervalue yourself," said the marquess: "Hester speaks of you with kindness and esteem."

"Ah!" said Lord Elmsdale, "the whole affair is an error, from beginning to end. I repeat I am ready to fulfil my engagement, and the more ready, because I see no chance of withdrawing without an *éclât*, which to me would be very disagreeable."

"The public *éclât*, I think you as much overrate," said the marquess, "as you underrate your own private qualities and merits."

"I see nothing like happiness in the prospect," answered the earl; "and if I am satisfied—indeed I *am* already—of Lady Hester's indifference—if a course could be pointed out by which I could retire without injuring her ——"

"Sir," said Lord Snowdon, flying into the most furious

rage, "you have already talked of injuring my daughter by your withdrawal. You tell me she has publicly exhibited her indifference—her dislike—is not that sufficient reason for your withdrawal? I am not the man to hear your desire to withdraw from my family expressed as a threat. If such be your feeling, there can be no difficulty in gratifying it, at your earliest convenience."

"What should I do, Lord Snowdon?" said the earl, who found that he had fired the train.

"Do, my Lord Elmsdale!" said the marquess, "take your hat and go; and if Lady Hester does not give herself the trouble of inquiring after you, I shall not trouble her by mentioning your lordship's name again to her. My son has not the advantage of your acquaintance, and has declined even the honour of being present at your marriage. Nobody will question your decision—at least nobody on *my* part or in *my* behalf—whatever arrangements may be necessary to conclude this separation of our interests, can be made by our respective men of business."

"I hope, Lord Snowdon——" said Lord Elmsdale.

"Our hopes, my lord, are at an end," said the marquess; saying which, his lordship rang the bell—the servant entered.

"Lord Elmsdale's carriage," said the marquess.

The servant saw that a storm had been raging, and proceeded to find the chariot, which, if the marquess had not either resolved to sacrifice every thing to effect, or had not in reality lost his recollection in his rage, he must have known could not at that early hour have arrived.

Lord Elmsdale did not, as indeed he well could not, hesitate as to his next move: but making a slight, and what he meant to be a particularly dignified bow to the marquess, quitted the room, and in a few minutes afterwards the house.

Thus had the Marquess of Snowdon, in a moment of irritated pride, kicked down the fabric which he had for months been constructing with infinite pains and labour; and thus had Lord Elmsdale, by a simple appeal—simple enough—to nature and truth, achieved for poor Lady Hester, what nothing else in the world could have accom-

plished. The idea of condescension or consideration from the second Earl of Elmsdale, whose grandfather had been a sugar-baker, was to the Marquess of Snowdon unbearable; and without at the moment reflecting upon the "effect," which the result of the affair would have upon the world, or upon what was almost as dear to him as the world's opinion, his union with Elizabeth Oldham, he spurned with indignation the alliance, which two days before he lauded to the skies, as the most admirable connexion that could be found for his daughter.

To see Lady Hester *then* would be in the highest degree imprudent; imbued as he was with the belief of Miss Everingham's active agency in the whole affair, he dare not trust himself with an interview with her. It was early, but he could not bear to be alone—he ordered his carriage immediately, and drove to Brookes's, having of late gone there rarely, and having been put up at White's the week before; there he remained till about twelve, and thence proceeded to Crockford's, when, finding nobody, he returned to Grosvenor Square, and having heard that Ladv Hester was going on favourably, retired to bed, but not to sleep.

In the mean time Lord Elmsdale, who, although quiet as a lamb, felt there was something due to his character and station, proceeded to the Travellers, where he found—that which, they say, is so difficult to find upon any other occasion—a friend; to whom he detailed the occurrences of the evening, subsequently consulting him upon the propriety, or rather the necessity, of sending the marquess a message. As the incivilities of the Illustrious were exhibited in a *tête-à-tête;* and no personal rudeness had been displayed which could justify such a proceeding; and as Lord Elmsdale told the story, which nobody but the marquess himself could contradict (and he was the last man in the world to admit himself to have been in a passion), the "friend at the Travellers" scouted the idea of calling him out; and the seceding earl retired peacefully to his residence at half-past eleven o'clock, and before one was as sound asleep as if he had not been half-married in the morning.

CHAPTER XI.

When the marquess awoke after a restless night, he felt a confused recollection of having taken a very decisive measure the preceding evening, with regard to his daughter's marriage; and, in that brief moment of mystification, when, between sleeping and waking, the imaginary and the real are so curiously blended, the impression upon his mind was, that he had acted not only rudely but rashly. In a few moments, however, he was "himself again," and resolved, that having taken this course, nothing should divert him from it, or induce him to seek a reconciliation with Lord Elmsdale, in whose opinions of his daughter's feelings and sentiments his lordship could not help perfectly agreeing.

His first inquiry was after Lady Hester, in reply to which a message from Miss Everingham informed him that she had slept during the night, and was much more calm, and less feverish, than she had been on the preceding evening. The marquess resolved to see her after breakfast, and then, having attended an appointment in Downing Street — the most fruitful in events of any he had ever made — he should proceed to Richmond to dine with his affianced one, and communicate the entire "break off" between the earl and Lady Hester.

While he was at breakfast, Miss Everingham made her appearance, and, in a moment afterwards, was perfectly sensible that something had occurred to ruffle the serenity of the Magnifico. His lordship's answer to the commonplace inquiry after his health bespoke the "temper of his mind."

"I am as well, ma'am," said his lordship, "as you could expect to find me."

"I am sure ——" Miss Everingham was going to say.

"I am serious, Miss Everingham — Lord Elmsdale is gone, ma'am — gone from this house for ever You may tell my daughter *that*, after your own fashion. Lord Elmsdale thinks she will be glad to hear it — so do you — so do I; but the departure of Lord Elmsdale is conse-

quent neither upon my daughter's conduct nor upon mine, but upon some idle gossip of yours, ma'am.

Nobody who had not heard the sonorous "ma'am," with which the marquess's angry addresses to ladies invariably terminated, can imagine the harsh and tremendous twang with which the word came from his lordship's lips.

"Mine, Lord Snowdon!"

"Yes, ma'am, yours," said the marquess. "You had some conversation with his lordship before dinner yesterday; from that—whatever its points might have been—he gathered the idea—if not the certainty—that Lady Hester's illness at church arose from disinclination to him, which disinclination to him has its origin in an affection for somebody else."

"My lord, I ——"

"Ay, ma'am, I dare say there is no truth in this," interrupted the marquess. "I think a daughter of mine would scarcely permit her feelings to overcome her duty, and that this prepossession of hers is all imaginary; but the earl does not think so; he is a weak empty person, and his mind is soon imbued with the most absurd notions; so it is—he is convinced that her heart is engaged — and so are *you*, ma'am."

"Indeed," said Miss Everingham, trembling from head to foot, "I ——"

"I want no discussions," said Lord Snowdon, "nor shall I, at the present moment, press her upon the subject. I have taken a line, and adopted a course which must be followed and acted upon. Tell Hester, in the first instance, to have the jewels and trinkets with which Lord Elmsdale presented her properly packed up, and sent down to me, in order that they may be returned."

"My lord," said Miss Everingham, "how shall I be able to break this important intelligence to her in her present state of mind?"

"What! ma'am," said the marquess, "you think the joy will kill her? No; you may tell her in safety; the Plinlimmons, thank Heaven, have strength of mind to bear surprises."

"Her mind has been sufficiently tried during the last four-and-twenty hours," said Miss Everingham.

"Well, ma'am," said Lord Snowdon, "all *I* consider at the moment are the proprieties and decencies of society; it would have an exceedingly bad 'effect' if she were to retain these jewels an hour after the final rejection of her lover; for recollect, ma'am, it was *I* who sent away Lord Elmsdale; and recollect that, in telling this story, as you necessarily must, the point is, that the final separation took place at *my* desire — it is no defection on the part of Lord Elmsdale, ma'am — remember *that* — but an expulsion on mine."

"Would you not see Lady Hester yourself, Lord Snowdon?" said Miss Everingham, whose alarm at the responsibility which was imposed upon her by being made the channel of such a communication was strangely combined with excessive pleasure excited by the circumstance itself, and who was in such a state of agitation, that she almost unconsciously suggested the thing which of all others would have been most dreadful to Lady Hester.

"No, ma'am," said the marquess, "you have been the principal cause of this *éclât* — reap the only advantage you are likely to obtain from it, in the gratification of communicating the success of your manœuvres to your *protégée*."

"Indeed, Lord Snowdon," said Miss Everingham, who had forgotten the extent of her communicativeness to Lord Elmsdale the day before, "I have never ——"

"I tell you ma'am, I desire no discussion," replied his lordship; "for the short time which we shall continue inmates of the same house, let there be peace between us. I have observed, of late, a disposition on your part, and on that of my daughter, to rebel against my decisions, and oppose my desires. That she should be in some degree discomposed by my intentions with respect to my second marriage is natural, and pardonable, and I forgive her; but I regret that any influence should have been used to destroy all my arrangements about her union with Lord Elmsdale, which, for all our sakes, was most desirable, and the frus-

tration of which places her in a most awkward and delicate position."

This was the first "notice to quit" that Miss Everingham had received. Her mind was satisfied upon that point — her sailing orders had arrived, and the question which she had long been debating in her mind was completely set at rest. Till now, she had imagined that perhaps she might continue to hold on after the marriage of the new Lady Snowdon, and so, between the family in Grosvenor Square and that of the Elmsdale's in the country, make out a year as usual.

"No, ma'am," continued the marquess, "do *you* tell my daughter what has happened. I am going out on important business, but shall return at two; then, knowing as she will, the great outline of the affair, she may, perhaps, bear a visit from me. That I am mortified, I admit, and deeply; but I can scarcely blame her dislike of Lord Elmsdale — he is a silly person; and, in short, I consider the result, however unlucky in appearance, as an escape, in fact. You will let every body understand, Miss Everingham, that I am exceedingly gratified at having been able, with honour and propriety, to back out; that is the tone — and the right feeling upon the subject. So now, ma'am, I must wish you a good morning for the present; remember to have all the trinkets ready for me when I return, and tell Hester to expect me at two; and tell her, ma'am, that I do not believe a word about any prior attachment on her part, and that I forgive her for *her* share in this business."

To all this Miss Everingham bowed assent, and so they parted; she, however, not believing one syllable his lordship said, with regard either to his feelings or forgiveness, but, on the contrary, being convinced that he was acting a part in what, from all she knew of his character and temper, promised to turn out a domestic tragedy.

To different scenes the actors immediately repaired; — Miss Everingham to communicate what had occurred to Lady Hester, Lord Snowdon to hear what the premier had to communicate.

The difficulty which Miss Everingham experienced

arose, as the marquess had truly said, from the certainty she felt of the powerful effect which her intelligence would produce upon Lady Hester's mind. This difficulty, however, was most curiously and considerably diminished by the circumstance of Lady Hester's preparation for the intelligence by her maid, who was in possession of the whole history of the "break off" long before the marquess thought proper to make the communication to Miss Everingham. Lord Elmsdale's valet had made his call at Lord Snowdon s early in the day, and detailed the arrangements made by his lord for his immediate departure to the Continent; the travelling carriage having been sent to the coach-maker's, in order that the united arms of Plinlimmon and Mudge (the family name of Lord Elmsdale was Mudge!) might be painted out; all the servants hired for the increased establishment being to be paid off in the course of the afternoon.

"Putting all these little circumstances together, Mrs. Simmons," said Lord Elmsdale's man to Lady Hester's woman, "it satisfies me that there is a screw loose somewhere; what it is, in course, I don't pretend to know — as how should I? — but, as far as the marriage between *our* houses is concerned, rely upon it, it's N. G. — no go."

Fired by this intelligence, so eloquently conveyed, was it possible for Mrs. Simmons to conceal her knowledge — or restrain her curiosity? Knowing so much, she must know more; and knowing that her lady certainly did not know so much as she did, could she "hide her candle under a bushel?" — could she seem ignorant of what must be generally known in a few hours, and what was then a secret? Of what use is a secret if one mayn't tell it? — thought Mrs. Simmons; and thus it was that Lady Hester, although unable clearly to understand what had actually happened, was, in a great degree, prepared for the details which were to justify the extraordinary intelligence of her intelligent servant.

It is impossible to describe the relief which the poor young lady felt, the weight which seemed to be lifted from her heart, when she became fully sensible of what had really occurred. She, like Miss Everingham, dreaded the

calmness of her father — a vindictive man when calm is a tremendous object ; but let his anger take what shape it might, any thing was better than the marriage with Lord Elmsdale, whose bad qualities, she was convinced, would now be magnified by her father, whose course, in affecting to consider the frustration of the match he so earnestly desired on the previous day a most happy event, she had anticipated even before her kind friend told her, what "tone" was to be given to the affair, in order to produce the "effect" the marquess intended.

At the premier's, much more decisive results were obtained. Lord Snowdon's propositions had received the most marked attention, and at the crisis, into the details of which it would be quite superfluous here to enter, his aid and support was of such importance, as to be supposed capable of turning the nicely-balanced scale of parties. The dissolution of parliament was still delayed ; and an idea appeared to prevail, that ministers would meet the House of Commons as it was then constituted : in this case a difficulty arose about Lord Snowdon s zeal, for it was hardly to be hoped that the five Whigs whom he had returned would all immediately turn right round at his lordship's suggestion. Upon minor points, and indeed upon many points, these independent patriots would not have hesitated to put their helms hard up, and go about, as the breath of their patron filled the sails ; but they had characters to lose, and therefore it was only in the event of a dissolution that Lord Snowdon could be of material service, for if the parliament met, and his five declined ratting — this, however, was supposing an extreme case— he could only get them out by so far wounding their politics as to induce them to take the Chiltern Hundreds, and make room for other men of better politics ; but this could not be done in time to secure their votes apon the first important divisions of the session. Nevertheless, there they were, bound hand and foot, and delivered over to their enemies, it depending entirely upon their own strength and spirit, whether they would break their bonds and save their honour by a speedy flight.

As to the marquess's influence in the upper house, it

had certainly received a blow in the difference between him and Lord Elmsdale. One vote gone — but this was a matter upon which he did not dwell, and his power was still important: — the bargain too was already made; and this, with a few conditions annexed to the office itself, formed the leading features of his negotiation for the desired governor-generalship. On this important morning, those conditions were accepted, the agreement was ratified, and the marquess congratulated by the premier upon his appointment to the Indian vice-royalty. It was not desirable that it should be publicly mentioned just yet — but it was *his*.

Many people have seen the vast Gog and Magog high aloft in the Guildhall of the City of London, and from below, marvelled at their stupendous size. They were Boralowskis to the million, compared with Lord Snowdon in his own estimation, as he walked along Whitehall on his return towards Grosvenor Square. His eye seemed to reproach the sentinels on duty for not saluting him, and he appeared even disappointed that the king's guard itself did not turn out as he approached.

All great benefits have their drawbacks — the sun hath its spots; and the corresponding evil of the marquess's great good was, that he was bound not to mention it publicly. Every body he met bowed and spoke as usual; his rank and station as it was commanded the respect he received; but, if they had only known that he was the real, sole, and original Bahauder, governor-general of uncountable millions — but, no matter, the day would soon come when it must be known: and in the mean while, to no ear but one would he confide it — to his Elizabeth's - she was an exception to any general rule of silence, *she* was his own, and moreover destined to share with him the glittering musnud, and protect the suffering people of Munneystumpum.

He had now to perform a different duty: he had to descend from his oriental stilts, slide down from his lofty howdah, fixed on his tallest elephant, and betake himself to his suffering daughter's bedside; to be sure, the certainty of his elevation to the long-desired honour had

sweetened his lordship's temper — it made him think of the broken marriage as something of secondary consideration, which would scarcely have troubled his mind, if it had not overset his arrangements for the establishment of Lady Hester previous to his departure.

Had she married, all difficulty about her, during his absence, would have been obviated—she would have been settled, and there an end; but now, he was puzzled how he should act: of course she could not remain living with Miss Everingham in his town and country houses; it would be necessary that she should reside with her aunt, an aunt who was the aversion of the marquess, because she never had forgiven him his conduct to her late sister during her lifetime, and because she never humoured his pride or encouraged his vanity, and above all, because she believed in his resemblance to the facetious and versatile Mr. Buggins, of the T.R.C.G.

About his son, the marquess had made up his mind not to think at all. He had written him a brief but severe answer to his letter, of which he had never spoken truly to Lady Hester. He reproached him with ungraciousness and ingratitude, and supposed the case of his refusing to join him in making the necessary provision for the future marchioness. To this last part of his letter he had as yet received no answer — he expected it daily; his hope of compliance rested rather upon the influence of Burford over Lord Malvern, than his son's own feelings: he had, he felt convinced, secured Burford's most strenuous exertions in his favour, and insured his co-operation in rendering Malvern eventually reconciled to the marriage. How far his lordship had succeeded, we, who know something of "both sides," may perhaps be better able to judge than his lordship.

Incidents began to thicken: just as the marquess turned the corner of Pall Mall, he met his excellent friend the Duke of St. Leonard's, to whom he was himself going, to relieve him and the duchess from any farther delay in town, in the expectation of completing the match between Lady Hester and Lord Elmsdale. The duke, however, had heard of the separation, and spared Lord Snowdon

any lengthened explanation of the circumstances. The duchess had called, he said, in Grosvenor Square, to inquire after Lady Hester, and as circumstances had occurred, they had prepared to leave London the next day.

"You have heard the news?" said the duke.

"No — what?" said Lord Snowdon.

"Poor Lord Wansborough is dead."

"Lord Wansborough!" said the marquess.

"Yes," said the duke; "there are a regiment, a government, and a blue riband, at the disposal of ministers — what lucky dogs!"

The duke was a whig — he thought the marquess one — they had not talked politics together for the last six weeks. The words "lucky dogs," which were used by his grace in a sneering and reproachful sense, sounded like music to the marquess's ears; — the desired, promised riband vacant — poor dear Lord Wansborough — excellent, amiable man — all talent and virtue — gone to heaven, if ever man went there, and, better than all, had left his George and garter behind him.

"Which way are you walking, duke?" said Lord Snowdon.

"I am going to the Travellers," was the reply.

"I'll walk there with you," said his lordship.

And so he did, but he did not stay there. Like Horne Tooke, the duke stopped at Brentford — the marquess went farther; insatiable rat as he was, he returned forthwith to Downing Street, and communicated the intelligence he had just received of Lord Wansborough's death to the premier.

"Yes, we knew that last night," was the answer; which puzzled him, because he certainly had been promised the first blue riband, and it might at least have been mentioned to him when he was there before; as it had not, he entered his claim, got no specific reply, and walked back again to Grosvenor Square.

The agitation, the aching anxiety, that sort of feverish doubt which hangs over a man, promised a thing and not quite certain that he is to have it; a dread of hearing even the surmises of his own acquaintance, who, ignorant that i

is the object of his ambition, appropriate it to half a dozen different people — all this, mixed up with his family worries, preyed upon the marquess, and sent him to Lady Hester's room absolutely calm, and even indifferent upon the point of which she so much dreaded the discussion.

"How do you feel yourself, Hester dear," said his lordship, seating himself at the bedside, and taking one of her feverish hands in his.

"Better, sir," said Lady Hester.

"You were surprised, I conclude," said the marquess, "at the abrupt termination of our connexion with Lord Elmsdale."

Lady Hester could answer only by tears.

"You must not flurry yourself, dear child," said the marquess; "I believe you are indebted to Miss Everingham for the *dénouement*."

"Me! my lord?" said Miss Everingham, who was sitting at a table at the other end of the room.

"I think so," said Lord Snowdon; "however, my maxim is, never let the world see that a family is agitated by domestic conflicts — it has the worst possible effect. Nothing could be more injurious to you, my dear child, than the idea that Lord Elmsdale had been driven away, by reports of your having conceived some prior attachment, which I am convinced Miss Everingham's conversation with him led him to believe. This induced him to use expressions to me, conveying an idea, that if I proposed to force him into the marriage, he was ready to submit; but that he felt it right to do so, only lest you should suffer in the estimation of the world by his declining it. This I could not endure: the idea that the grandson of Mr. Mudge, the sugar-baker, of Pudding Lane, fancied himself condescending to preserve the respectability of a daughter of mine, was too ridiculous to be borne for a moment. I confess I lost my temper, and behaved even rudely; but I was angry, and am ready to answer for it if called upon."

"Oh! my dear father," said Lady Hester, the remark so sadly coinciding with her previously expressed apprehension of some personal quarrel, in which the marquess might be consequently involved.

"Do not alarm yourself, Hester," said the marquess; "these mongrels never fight — they snap and snarl, and run away; — however, had he been a man of my own pretensions I could not have endured the notion of being patronised and supported. No — I declare if it had been the oldest duke of the empire, who had been on the point of marriage with you, under the same circumstances, I should have acted similarly, even if there were no chance of your ever having another offer. I would rather than submit to such an indignity, see you married to my steward — or Malvern's tutor — or any body."

This was an accidental wound, but it was a sharp one. Luckily, in the energy of declamation, the marquess had let go his daughter's hand, or he would have felt the effect of the shock he had inflicted. What did he mean? — that was Lady Hester's first thought when she recovered from the blow — did he suspect — did he fancy — had Miss Everingham, in her zeal and anxiety to produce the effect which she had so successfully brought about, and which now filled them with so much terror, either by accident or design, glanced at the individual who had gained Lady Hester's heart?

"My mind," continued Lord Snowdon, "is at present too deeply occupied with matters of first-rate importance — public matters in which I am likely soon to be more deeply engaged" (never did man so long to tell the whole history of the governor-generalship and the garter) — "to enter into a discussion upon the arrangements which it will be necessary to make upon my marriage, now that yours is at an end. I shall probably leave England for some time; and I think it might be advisable to inquire of your aunt, Lady Ospringe, whether she would be inclined to afford you a home during my absence. "I need not," continued he, "I am sure, refer to the fancy conjured up in Lord Elmsdale's head — brains he has none — about your having formed an attachment for some other person."

"Rely upon it, sir," said Lady Hester, "you shall never have occasion to reproach me upon that point."

"That is somewhat evasive, Hester," said the mar-

quess; "the tone and manner of the answer are not marked with your usual frankness and candour."

"Consider, Lord Snowdon," said Miss Everingham, "Lady Hester has had much upon her mind within the last few hours."

"Not too much upon her mind, ma'am, to answer *me*, when I ask a question," said his lordship.

"I mean to say," said Lady Hester, sobbing, "that Lord Elmsdale's retirement can have no connexion with such a subject—I — cannot speak — trust me, my father — trust me — you shall never have a cause of complaint."

"This is trifling! — This, ma'am," said his lordship, addressing Miss Everingham, "this is a corroboration of your tattle — this authenticates your gossip! Who is the man? tell me this instant."

Father, dear father!" — said Lady Hester.

"I insist upon knowing! Who is it?" cried the marquess.

"Mr. Burford, my lord," said a voice, soft and gentle, to the infinite astonishment of Lady Hester and Miss Everingham.

"Who's there?" exclaimed the marquess; "what is this?"

"Me, my lord," said Mrs. Simmons, turning as pale as death at the marquess's question, put with all the vehemence of anger.

"What is it you say?" said Lord Snowdon.

"Hall has sent up word, my lord, that Mr. Burford is in the library," replied she.

"Burford! What, the tutor?" asked the marquess.

"Yes, my lord, from France, I believe he said," answered the wretched hair curler.

"Say I am coming."

"For this relief much thanks," thought Mrs. Simmons, who lost no time in absconding, and sending down the answer by the footman, who had brought the message up stairs.

"I am in despair," said Lord Snowdon; "there is more in this affair than I yet know — but I will unravel it. I love you dearer than my life; but if I find that you

have been playing a game with me — deceiving me — tricking me — laughing at me — there is no power that shall prevent me from casting you off, and thrusting you from me, loaded with my bitterest curses. It is not, Lady Hester, for your own disgrace I shall punish you; it is for the disgrace you must bring upon your family. Recollect what you owe to your station! Remember your ancestors, and do not hope that the annals of our house, pure, honourable, and noble as they are, shall be stained in my lifetime by the daughter of my love. No — deceit and treachery I abhor. I yet must hope you innocent — but if that hope is fallacious — not even the desire I feel of seeing happiness in my family will hinder me from distinctly marking to the world my view of the degradation you have entailed upon your name."

Saying which, his lordship quitted the room, as nearly mad as any rational creature well could be, who had no grounds whatever for believing that which was, in fact, really true. Lady Hester might have been in love with a duke or a dancing-master, a marquess or a mountebank; he could not tell who might be the object of her affections, even supposing they *were* pre-engaged — but the thing was fixed. He convinced himself first, that she was attached to somebody; and then, from her backwardness to confess the fact, he flew to the conclusion that the object of her affection was somebody so much beneath herself, as to make her certain that the mention of his name would incur his most violent denunciation.

That he was right, unfortunately right, poor Lady Hester and Miss Everingham felt; and their miseries and agonies were not in a little degree heightened, first, by his lordship's extreme hypothesis concerning the ultra disgrace of his daughter's marrying Burford, and, secondly, by the extraordinarily opportune — or rather inopportune — mention of his name in the way of announcement by the trembling Simmons.

"Only conceive," said Lady Hester, "Mr. Burford is here! he brings news, no doubt, from Malvern. Will he stay? in all probability he will dine here, Anne. You will see him — inquire, inquire every thing about my brother;

to him, and him alone, who loves me, must I look for aid and advice. I cannot expect my father to delay his marriage, nor does he intend it. It is I who have broken the engagement into which he entered, not to bring home a new wife to my mother's house till I was gone."

"If Mr. Burford dines here," said Miss Everingham, "I will manage——"

"Take care, take care, my dear Anne," said Lady Hester; "be cautious lest my father should suspect—and, oh, to what a wretched state am I reduced, to wish to elude his vigilance. I am guilty, guilty, guilty! and yet this carefulness is not for myself; it would bring ruin upon Mr Burford. My father has been beyond measure kind to him—the thought—what we have heard just now decides that—the idea that I—oh! Anne, I must not trust myself to think."

"Be at rest, dear Lady Hester," said Miss Everingham, "all will go well. You heard your father say that he is to quit this country for some years after his marriage. Rely upon it, he is appointed ambassador at some foreign court. You will be left under the care of Lady Ospringe. No offer will be forced upon you. Lady Ospringe will be a powerful friend in time of need; she is your own aunt, the sister of your excellent mother. If Lord Snowdon continues in that determination, nothing more advantageous to your peace of mind could happen."

"Ah!" said Lady Hester, "I believe that I could find no better or more agreeable home than my aunt's; but my life is destined to be a blank to me. I have sinned, and deserve to be punished — repentance is the lot marked out for me."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Simmons, who was the bearer of a letter from Lord Malvern to his sister. The address was a convincing proof that the intelligence of the overthrow of the marriage had not reached him — it was directed to the countess of Elmsdale. The expression of Mrs. Simmons's countenance when she delivered the packet formed a striking and agreeable contrast to the tear-bedewed faces of the ladies.

Burford's arrival was to himself most inopportune. He

had so timed his visit to his patron, that he should arrive the day after the wedding, when the bride should have left the house, and all the outward signs of nuptial gaiety have been removed. He, with his mother and sister, reached town from Dover about half past five; and without stopping, even to change his dress — anxious, if possible, to leave London the next morning for Silgrove, hurried up to Grosvenor Square, and found himself *tête-à-tête* with the marquess, doomed to hear all the details of the misadventures of the preceding day, and to listen to the heart-rending intelligence that Lady Hester was seriously ill, still unmarried, and under the same roof with himself.

That he must dine with the marquess he found inevitable; he had no possible excuse to offer for declining his invitation, or, as his lordship felt, "command." He accordingly "obtained leave" to return to the hotel at which he had deposited his mother and sister; and having apprised them of the extraordinary event which had occurred, and made himself fit to appear in Grosvenor Square, returned to the mansion of the marquess.

Although we have safely landed the Burfords in London, the reader may, perhaps, not be displeased to know in what manner the progress of the party was continued after their arrival at Beauvais, where we left them quietly established on the first night after their departure from Paris.

In the morning there did not appear any very strong disposition on the part of any of the travellers to hurry their preparations for departure; it seemed — and it is a feeling that must have occurred, at one time or another of every man's life, and woman's too — as if they were all perfectly happy and contented where they were, but that, at the same time, it was all too pleasant not to be a little wrong. Burford was pleased to see his kind friend in such good spirits, considering all that had so recently occurred, and Mrs. Burford was pleased because her son was pleased; that Maria was pleased she took no great pains to conceal, for in truth it was the happiest week of her life, and the young lord was pleased because he saw every body else was pleased.

Still there hung over them all a sort of reserve — a kind

of restraint, unaccountable as it was natural. Lord Malvern selected Maria for his companion; and as she leant upon his arm, and listened to his agreeable conversation, she felt a regret, which she could yet scarcely characterise, to think that in two days more they were to part — and part for ever. The quiet, domesticated Lord Malvern, of Beauvais, attending with reverence to the history of Jeanne Hachette, related to the party by a woman who looked old enough to have been her contemporary, and then sauntering about into the manufactories, and cheapening tapestries, and bargaining for silks, merely to make conversation, was a different being to Lord Malvern, in his proper sphere of action, where, amongst his peers and contemporaries, his society would be courted, his goodness flattered, and his greatness deferred to. The arm on which she leant was destined for the noblest and the fairest of her sex; the hand that kindly pressed hers when they met or parted, would be sought by the mighty and designing; and all this passed through her gentle mind, and produced no feeling, save one—it was a womanly feeling:—she felt no regret that she could not always share the fate and fortunes of Lord Malvern; all she lamented was, that he with whom she could have been so happy was so much her superior.

This sentiment, moderated as it was by delicacy of feeling, dignity of character, purity of heart, and piety of mind, was more, infinitely more dangerous to Maria's happiness, than she at the moment fancied. The attentions which Lord Malvern paid her were marked, and now characterised by a constant deference to her opinion, and a frequent appeal to her taste and judgment. Her mother watched her during these "three glorious days," as Malvern thought them, with the tenderest anxiety. Still, what could she do, how act? She could not, like an ill bred boor, call her child away from the society of their best and warmest friend: she could not force herself upon Lord Malvern's attention, or seize his arm to exclude her child. The excellent parent had been over cautious, and, as will happen sometimes, had been caught in her own trap. The young lord delighted in Maria's society; and, although he did not go the length of suspecting that she

was hurried away from Paris to secure her from his advances, he resolved, by assuming the arrangement of the journey, to keep her near him to the latest possible moment.

At Beauvais they attended mass in the cathedral — that was unlucky. To hearts that sympathise, full of undeclared and untold love, nothing is more congenial than the solemn strains of church music: the swelling organ, the uplifted voice, the holy feeling which the sacred place itself inspires, excite in minds, disposed as those of Malvern and Maria were at the moment, a combination of feelings more powerful than words can express. As the chant of the priests and choristers reverberated amidst the traceries of the roof, Maria felt a chilly coldness run through her limbs, succeeded by a glowing flush which suffused her cheeks, and when the elevated Host was presented to the prostrate people, she lost the recollection of every thing around her, and bursting into tears leant for support upon her kind companion.

Brighter in *his* eyes than diamonds were those tears of genuine sensibility; dearer to him that artless burst of feeling than all the studied phrases of society, and all the cant of morbid sentimentality.

After this incident, the manner of Lord Malvern to Maria was evidently changed. He could no longer talk fluently upon indifferent subjects; he no longer seemed to take an interest in passing objects; he walked silently and slowly homewards, the conversation being confined to his inquiries how she felt, and her answers — which, it must be confessed, partook, in a great degree, of the character of the questions.

They left Beauvais soon after noon; but not until Maria was perfectly recovered. Restoratives were assiduously administered by the attentive nobleman; and his anxiety in watching the effect they produced upon the young lady's headache was infinitely greater than any he had expressed upon any other subject since his sister's letter had cured him of all solicitude about his once loved heartless Elizabeth — or, as he was wont in other days to call her — his Eliza. The weather was fine and favourable; but Burford soon

perceived — for Lord Malvern kept his schemes entirely to himself — that they were destined to pass another night upon the road. Nobody could complain; but it was not until the beginning of this day's journey that Maria herself felt nervous and uneasy in any serious degree: she sat opposite to Lord Malvern in the carriage, and was sure by his altered manner that she must have done something to effect the sudden change she observed; the frank openness of his conduct had given place to a gentle, yet more solicitous, care about her, wholly different in its character, and particularly painful to her, because it seemed that he was devoting a care and attention to her of which she ought not to be the object. The moment this feeling was excited, it was clear that all Mrs. Burford's precautions had been useless.

The journey proceeded much as usual. On the road from Beauvais to Abbeville, where his lordship proposed to halt for the night, there is nothing worthy of remark: a wide open country, almost undotted by houses and unenlivened by villages, is all that greets the eye; it seems marvellous how the corn which covers the vast space on every side is sown or reaped, human beings appear so scarce; in fact, Picardy is extremely well described by the riddle of a map, in which there are rivers without water, towns without streets, and houses without inhabitants.

After a tiresome *trajet*, the party, less happy, and more uneasy than they had yet felt themselves, reached Abbeville, where Lord Malvern's courier had prepared every thing for their reception. After dinner, Maria complained of headache, and retired for the evening; the conversation was flat; the day of Lady Hester's marriage was fast approaching; in forty-eight hours she would have become the wife of Lord Elmsdale. This depressed Burford; his depression lowered the spirits of his mother, who was the more anxious about his evident unhappiness from her ignorance of its real cause; and Lord Malvern was more dull than either of them, because Maria, who was the unhappiest of the party, had left them.

To be sure the next day might bring something brighter,

and, at all events, there was another church — and a very fine one too — to visit at Abbeville.

The morning came, and with it a promenade, but the ease and frankness of the previous day were wanting. Whenever Lord Malvern appealed to Maria upon any subject, she referred to her mother, who, with Burford, was walking behind them. She seemed conscious of the difficulty of her situation; and what, four-and-twenty hours before, was an apprehension that she was too happy, had become a certainty that in four-and-twenty hours more she should be miserable.

At Abbeville they visited the cathedral, admired the colossal statues of its façade, and its Gothic towers (luckily they were not there during the hours of service), and having perambulated its streets, returned to the inn, and resumed their journey.

They reached Calais on the eve of Lady Hester's marriage, and they also appeared to have reached the *acme* of melancholy. Lord Malvern and Burford were engaged in long and thoughtful conversations, and Maria's depression was unmitigated by any liveliness on the part of her mother.

It was in the afternoon of the wedding day that the Burfords took leave of the Continent and Lord Malvern; his lordship having charged Burford with the communication to his father, which he felt had better be made verbally, as the opportunity offered, than by letter, respecting his readiness to accommodate himself to his wishes as regarded the settlements, announcing that he should stay at Calais until the return of Burford, in readiness to receive his father's solicitor, and execute any necessary "act and deed" for the arrangement of the affair.

The parting of the party was painful in the extreme. Lord Malvern offered his arm to Maria; she looked as though she ought to give precedence to her mother. This ceremonious feeling was new and artificial, and very suspicious. His lordship overruled her scruples, and walked along the pier.

Neither spoke. At length Lord Malvern, in a subdued tone, and evidently struggling with strong feeling, said, —

"Shall you remain entirely in England?"

"I believe so," replied Maria, with an air of affected gaiety and indifference, and knowing nothing of her fate or her mother's intentions.

"Where — at Silgrove?" said Lord Malvern.

"That must depend upon Charles's hospitality," replied the young lady.

"I shall hear of you from *him*," said Lord Malvern. "Do you correspond with him?"

"Not very regularly," said Maria.

"I wish you would," said his lordship.

Maria did not answer.

"It will be my greatest pleasure in my self-imposed exile to hear of *you*, Maria," said Lord Malvern.

"My mother is beckoning me," said Maria; "we are going wrong, Lord Malvern."

"Are we?" said his lordship.

"I am sure we are," said Maria — and she thought so too.

"Why go at all?" added he; his throat seemed parched — his hands were cold. Why had he delayed declaring his feelings? — it was now too late — yet he would have given the world to speak; all he *could* say was — "Maria, I believe I am mad."

This was spoken in an under tone, and Maria did not hear it — that is, she would not. What a situation for such a couple to be placed in! Look at all the connexions and intricacies, all the "wheels within wheels," which were at work in the world; consider the confusions and irritations, and all the evils which must evidently result from any serious termination of such an affair, and then do justice to the solicitude and anxiety of Mrs. Burford, in using every practicable means to prevent what, had she been as mean and mercenary as Lady Katharine Oldham, it would have been her most anxious desire to secure and conclude.

Burford was completely broken down. He could not but recollect that the day of parting from his friend was the day on which all that he held dear in the world was to be taken from him eternally; and Malvern, when he fervently pressed Maria's hand, felt angry with himself

that he had suffered any feeling connected with any other subject to have kept him from accompanying them. His leave-taking of Mrs. Burford was full of that grateful consideration which a noble heart can feel for disinterested kindness. The word was given, and the steamer went her way; and Malvern watched her, marked as she was by "her pendant of smoke," till the distance and the darkness of evening hid her from his sight. He returned to Quillacq's, to pass the first of a series of very agreeable evenings.

This is the brief history of the journey and voyage; and Burford having devoted the time which has been occupied in the narrative of their career to Calais, to making himself "amiable," finished his operations exactly in time for us to find him at dinner at Lord Snowdon's in Grosvenor Square.

The dinner was dull enough. Before Miss Everingham, the marquess did not choose to exhibit any symptoms of interest about his son, although in his earlier interview Burford had explained Lord Malvern's readiness and anxiety to meet his wishes, and convinced the marquess that he had no feeling with regard to his marriage which might not be overcome; not daring, however, to enlighten his lordship as to the original cause of his absolute detestation of it.

Miss Everingham, finding that Lord Snowdon kept the conversation upon every topic except the one to which she was most anxious to lead it, very soon retired, and left the marquess and the rector of Silgrove *tête-à-tête*.

"Burford," said his lordship, "I have been a good deal puzzled, and a good deal surprised to-day, at a circumstance to which I at first paid very little attention, but which at present strikes me as important, and upon which you, from your intimacy with Malvern, and his unlimited confidence in you, perhaps can enlighten me. Lady Hester's fainting in church, which I have detailed to you, I attributed to some physical cause, however indisposed to such weaknesses our family may be; but Lord Elmsdale — you see I talk to you as confidentially as Malvern does — Lord Elmsdale imagined it to proceed from some personal

dislike to himself, and thence concluded that she had formed some other and earlier attachment."

"Yes, sir," said Burford, just able to speak.

"Of this I thought nothing, because I know the deference she pays to my opinions, the readiness she has always evinced to follow my suggestions; and indeed because I know, above all, that it had so happened, that no persons for whom she could possibly entertain any regard of that nature have been about the house, except merely as casual visiters, and therefore I scouted the idea altogether; but this afternoon I had been down to Downing Street twice, and when I came in, I had a conversation with her, in which, to my surprise, I found, for the first time in my life, her answers to my questions on that particular point were evasive and by no means satisfactory."

"Indeed!" said Burford.

"Now, what I was going to ask," said Lord Snowdon, "is, that as Malvern and his sister have always been perfect friends, and almost constant companions, whether you — I don't desire any breach of confidence — of course not — it is not in my nature to do it — but, I mean, did you, in the course of ordinary conversation, ever hear Malvern say any thing which could lead you to believe that she had formed any sort of attachment for any body?"

"No, my lord," said Burford. "I certainly never heard — I — Lord Malvern has expressed an opinion to me, that her ladyship could not, as he imagined, knowing her taste and disposition, admire Lord Elmsdale."

"Lord Elmsdale!" said the marquess—"my dear Burford, Lord Elmsdale is an ass — a perfect simpleton. I don't talk of him — he is gone. If he had belonged to us, I should, of course, as the best possible policy, have upheld him, and put him forward; but he is gone. I don't know such a person — I am speaking of any former attachment."

"I never heard Lord Malvern mention any thing of the sort," said Burford.

"Well, now, I'll tell you what you must do for me," said the marquess; "whether you go down to Silgrove tomorrow or the next day cannot make much difference —

stay in town till Thursday; do me the kindness to bring Mrs. Burford and your sister to dinner here to-morrow, and we'll get them a box at some play — it will amuse them; and come early. I know that Lady Hester has a very high opinion of *you*, independently of the feeling she naturally entertains towards so great a favourite of her brother. There is something like awe in the character of a father; and although no man has less to frighten any body, about him, than myself, I can easily conceive, upon such a point, that sort of diffidence which is generated by apprehension. Now really I have no object in the world but to ascertain the fact. If it should be so, and the man is a gentleman, and of talent and accomplishments, and of that sort of fortune which is consistent with her prospects, I declare I care not the least whether he is titled or untitled, or what his politics, or any thing of that sort. Now, having that feeling, I think that you — if you will do me the favour — might, in an interview to-morrow — they tell me she will be in her *boudoir* — visible to friends — might talk to her — and, in the course of conversation, discover whether Lord Elmsdale's suspicions are correct; for I ought to tell you, that our cousin Anne seems to indulge in the same fancy."

"I fear, my lord," said Burford, "that I must go to Silgrove to-morrow, or ——"

"Really," said the marquess, "I almost wish that I had given Silgrove to somebody else, if its possession is to rob me of your society, and deprive me of your services in so justifiable a cause."

"My lord," said Burford, "forgive me ——"

"Forgive!" said Lord Snowdon, "my dear Mr. Burford, there is nothing to forgive. I have no claim upon you; so far from it, I consider that you have a claim on me for much more than I can ever bestow, for the great and essential services you have rendered Malvern: indeed, to speak the truth, I attribute the change in his opinions upon the subject of my marriage entirely to your kindness."

"No, Lord Snowdon," said Burford, "you wrong your son: from his own heart sprung the right and proper

feeling, which I have been happy enough to communicate. The sudden surprise, acting upon a warm aud sensitive mind, caused the letter, of which your lordship perhaps reasonably complains."

"But, Mr. Burford," said the marquess, "the objections are the same — the same lady is the object — the same events will be the result."

"True, my lord," said Burford; "but — I — of course, as I told Lord Malvern, on points of feeling, I felt I had no right to interfere. He wrote hastily, perhaps wrongly, in the first instance; but subsequently ——"

"Upon your counsel," said the marquess, "he amended his conduct — I know it. I only wish I had a deanery for you; and then, perhaps, I might induce you to assist me in finding out the alleged *penchant* of Lady Hester."

There sealed his fate with Burford, the most noble the Marquess of Snowdon. That he believed the living of Silgrove would purchase his dependent's influence with his son in favour of his marriage, we know; that it had done so, he fancied; and he suffered his belief upon that point to escape him. This Burford manfully repelled; but when his lordship followed up the blow by the supposition that an increased promotion would produce a decreased independence, and seeing Mr. Burford — little knowing the cause — shrink from the interference with Lady Hester, suggested a deanery as enough to make him quite subservient to his patron's views, he effectually fired the train.

To ask Burford to extort a confession from his daughter, which confession would make her his own, was something, and not a little; and Burford was prepared to resign all his offices connected with the Snowdon patronage, rather than attempt a duty which he could not, in the common course of nature, fulfil. The last insolent observation of the proud man terminated all his doubts as to the course he should pursue.

It grew late; the conversation flagged; Burford prepared to go; the marquess repeated his invitation to his mother and sister, and urged his calling at "about twelve." To all these propositions, Charles returned civil but inconclusive answers. He certainly had not anticipated the oc-

currences of the day; and least of all did he imagine, that he should have been called upon to perform a duty even more tremendous to him than that which he had so studiously and skilfully avoided. He took his leave, and promised that the marquess should either see or hear from him before noon.

The marquess shook him by both hands, congratulated him on his good looks, went forth even from the door of the dining-room (for they had not gone up-stairs) three feet into the hall, inquired the state of the weather, and did all the little good-naturisms of a third-rate twaddler, in order to please his chaplain, and, above all, to give the "*tone*" to the establishment.

Burford hurried to his hotel; the marquess stalked to his bed-room; and as he passed through the passages which led to it, with all the dignity of a governor-general, he might have been seen rubbing, with the palm of his hand, the place on his coat which was so soon to be occupied by the promised star of the illustrious order of the Garter!

CHAPTER XII.

In the morning, Lord Snowdon arose full of the anticipation of seeing his dear Elizabeth. He proposed, after Burford's interview with Lady Hester, and after he had possessed himself of the secrets of the confessional, to proceed to Richmond, where he intended to dine and stay the night; his lordship having, since the conclusion of his engagement with Miss Oldham, caused rooms to be secured for him at the Star and Garter, where he slept and breakfasted, upon the occasions of his not returning to town in the evening.

On his breakfast-table his lordship found several letters; amongst which, the first that caught his eye was one from the premier; it was brief — these were its contents: —

"Downing Street, — ——

"My dear Marquess,

"I am going to Windsor to-day. I am in great hopes

of being able to carry our point: you must not, however, be too sanguine. I hear that a *personal promise* from head-quarters stands in our way — under the circumstances I think this may be got over. The king comes to town to-morrow, and you shall hear the moment I get free. "Yours faithfully."

This did not exactly please him. He felt assured that if he had had to deal with a Whig ministry, personal promises, or personal wishes, would very soon be got rid of, not by being overcome, but by not being attended to; but as it was, he apprehended that the minister might concede to his master, and that he should lose his object, almost the dearest object of his life, and which he had, as he considered, actually been promised. As for the idea of making an extra knight of that select and illustrious order to which he aspired, the idea never suggested itself.

The next letter his lordship opened was from Burford— the reader must have a perusal of it.

"— Hotel.

"My Lord,

"It is with considerable difficulty, and under feelings of a most painful nature, that I address your lordship on the subject of a conversation which I had the honour of holding with your lordship last night.

"It will be unnecessary for me to enter at length into the reasons which suggest themselves to my mind, in opposition to your lordship's wish, that I should become the medium through which your lordship might ascertain the real state of Lady Hester's feelings upon subjects of the most delicate nature, into the discussion of which, as I last night stated, I consider myself neither officially nor personally justified in entering with her ladyship.

"I trust that my conduct for the many years through which I have had the honour of being connected with your lordship's family will be a sufficient evidence of my anxiety to do my duty rigidly and faithfully; indeed the very flattering manner in which your lordship has been pleased to evince your sense of my humble yet zealous services is a sufficient testimonial of the good opinion I

have constantly laboured to secure and maintain. It is with this conviction, that I have to entreat that your lordship will not attribute my positive refusal to converse with Lady Hester upon the topics to which your lordship last night referred to any indisposition to attend to your lordship's wishes whenever my duty may be justly required, but to a consciousness on my part of unfitness for the task which your lordship would assign me, and of the impropriety of which I should be guilty in assuming a character in your lordship's family which it forms no part of my functions to maintain.

"It is, however, impossible, particularly after an observation made by your lordship last night, that I should not be fully sensible of the favours with which your lordship has been pleased to honour me, nor can I, with that consciousness upon my mind, believe that I ought to continue to enjoy the benefits you have conferred upon me, entertaining, as I do, an opinion so widely different from that of your lordship, upon the character of the obligations which those favours impose. I, therefore, most respectfully and thankfully, beg leave to resign into your lordship's hands the presentation to the living of Silgrove; and I have by this post written to Lord Malvern, to announce to him that my character of tutor to his lordship terminates with this day.

"It is, I assure your lordship, not without the greatest pain that I have come to this decision. I part from Lord Malvern with a regret founded upon the warmest esteem and affection for the qualities of his head and heart; convinced that his later life will fully justify the expectations which his early career has naturally excited. I trust, that in what I have offered in justification of the conduct I have felt it due to my character to adopt, I shall not have had the misfortune to offend your lordship, than which, I beg to assure you, nothing is farther from my thoughts or wishes.

"I have the honour to be,

"My lord,

"Your lordship's faithful servant,

"CHARLES BURFORD.

"*The Marquess of Snowdon, &c. &c. &c.*"

"Capital!" said his lordship, as he began to re-read the letter by the aid of a pocket pair of spectacles, which he always used when alone, and for the quiet enjoyment of which he invariably breakfasted in his own room, except when he had visiters in the house; and for which reason, he also always breakfasted at the inn, when on his Philandering excursions to Richmond — "Capital! This is, indeed, the march of intellect, or of impudence! The schoolmaster is abroad now, or the deuce is in it! Resign a living and a tutorship, because his patron asks him to have half an hour's serious conversation with his daughter — impertinent upstart!"

Saying which, his lordship indignantly threw the letter on the table, and then began to think that the "impertinent upstart" had the best of the discussion. The living, however, might be of use in forwarding his public views; it was not much for a minister, but he would, at all events, put it at his disposal immediately upon his return from Windsor; — but, then, what was he to do about his son? Malvern would be left alone, and a thousand to one would form some unfortunate connexion; and, perhaps, disgrace his house, and lose the heiress that was bringing up for him, by a marriage beneath himself.

It was extremely embarrassing. He had declined coming over; yet clearly, as the marquess believed, under Burford's influence, had behaved most handsomely in worldly matters. He was at Calais — the solicitor was to meet him there — and he was to go to him the third day from the present one. That arrangement had been made under the idea that Lord Malvern was at Paris. Lord Snowdon resolved on making his *homme d'affaires* the negotiator of a peace between them, and instruct him, if possible, to induce his lordship to come back with him; a course he was led to adopt, by having discovered, from Burford's conversation, that the asperity of his feelings with respect to the marriage was considerably moderated.

All these things, however, were to be put by for the day. All were secondary to the duties of the lover, which the noble marquess was that morning going to pay. He for a moment doubted whether in his visit to Lady Hester

before his departure he should mention Burford's letter and resignation; but he speedily decided to say nothing about it, and the reason for his silence was a cogent one. If he mentioned the resignation, he must naturally mention the circumstances which had led to it; and hence his daughter would discover the design he had of ensnaring her into a confession of her prepossession in favour of somebody, by the instrumentality of the man whom he thought he had bribed sufficiently to induce him to commit a meanness, and undertake a commission, which, even if it had not been wholly out of the question as he was personally situated, would have been wholly unworthy of the character he had hitherto supported, or the profession which he had adopted.

His lordship's visit to Lady Hester was brief, cold, and uninteresting. She was in her *boudoir*, looking ill and unhappy; — indeed the strange notoriety in which the circumstance of the incomplete marriage had involved her, and the consciousness she felt of being obnoxious to public remark and observation, had a serious effect upon her mind, while the knowledge that Charles Burford and her father had been closeted for nearly five hours the preceding day and evening, kept her, during her stay in her room, in a constant flutter lest he should begin to speak of him, or quote his opinion, or perhaps announce a visit from him in the course of the morning, than which nothing could have been more natural. But, no — her nervousness was uncalled for; the marquess never mentioned him — never alluded to him — nor did a syllable escape him with reference to any thing connected with him, except inquiring of Lady Hester, what Lord Malvern had said in his letter.

"There were not half a dozen lines in the note," said Lady Hester: "he imagined I should have left town, and ——"

Here her utterance was stopped by tears — the marquess took her hand in his and pressed it.

"There, there, Hester dear," said his lordship, "do not worry yourself — never mind — I have no wish to know any thing about the letter — be calm — I will leave you —

talking is too much for you — I shall not return till to-morrow — let me find you better when I come back."

His lordship kissed her cheek, and making a cold and ceremonious bow to Miss Everingham, quitted the apartment.

To what a different scene did his lordship forthwith transport himself! In less than an hour he was in the billiard-room at Lady Katharine's villa, which, as he approached it, was ringing with mirth and laughter. Luncheon was just over, and Elizabeth Oldham and a Miss Macaw, a neighbour, were playing billiards, Frederick Richardson was marking, Lady Katharine and Mr. Losh were playing battledore and shuttlecock in the hall, and Miss Cammomile, the *ci-devant* governess, now on the half-pay of the family, was performing waltzes on the piano-forte in the drawing-room. Several little dogs were barking in different directions, and Lady Katharine, while she took her exercise, was talking in a tone of voice, louder and shriller than any thing else, either vocal or instrumental, in the house.

"Why, how gay you are, Lady Katharine," said the marquess, standing amazed. In a momentary lull his lordship's voice had been heard — down went the billiard maces — out of one of the windows hurried Frederick Richardson and Miss Macaw — away went the shuttlecocks and battledores — off scampered Miss Cammomile, and in came Miss Oldham — looking beautiful. She ran to the marquess with an air of affectionate playfulness, and his lordship received her with a condescension at once gratifying and surprising.

"My dear marquess," said Lady Katharine, "we thought you were lost; poor Elizabeth has been crying her eyes out — as I tell her, she will cry herself blind. Upon my word, I do recollect a circumstance — it was in Hampshire — an old gentleman ——"

"Come, Elizabeth, said the marquess, "let us take a stroll — I have a great deal to tell you, and a great deal to hear;" saying which, he led her out of the range of Lady Katharine's fire, which her ladyship immediately turned upon Mr. Losh, who, devoted as he was only to her lady-

ship's "feeds," as he elegantly called them, would gladly have spared her ladyship the exertion which she volunteered.

Her ladyship, however, felt it incumbent upon her to pursue Lord Snowdon, in order to inquire after Lady Hester's health, and to condole with him upon the disappointment, which she had been prevented doing on the morning it occurred, by a more interesting engagement at the else deserted breakfast-table.

"Elizabeth," said the marquess, when they were alone, "were you ever trusted with a state secret?"

"No, dear," said Miss Oldham. She always called him dear.

"Do you think you could keep one, if you were?"

"To be sure," said Miss Oldham, "try me."

"It is more important to *you* than many state secrets would be," said the marquess, "for you are very intimately concerned with it."

"Indeed!" said Miss Oldham, "how I should be concerned in a state secret I cannot imagine."

"Of course you will remember that I am pledged to silence," said the marquess, "and not even Lady Katharine must know what I am going to trust *you* with — I am appointed governor-general of India."

"Of India!" said Elizabeth, her face lengthening instead of lighting up — "dear me!"

"Do you not rejoice?" said Lord Snowdon; "are you not aware of the splendour, the magnificence, the power, the authority, the dignity of the office, all of which are reflected upon the lady of the governor-general?"

"Oh! it is very fine," said Miss Oldham, "but then it is India after all; and consider what a distance Bengal is from Hyde Park Corner."

"Yes, but, Elizabeth," said the marquess, disappointed in the highest or rather deepest degree, "there is a king in England, and no subject may lawfully expect to fill the throne; but in India, I shall be king — emperor — and you, Elizabeth, will be my queen."

"That sounds very grand," said Miss Oldham, "but I'm sure, when one looks at the people who come back

from your future empire, and see their poor dear little yellow faces, and bald heads, and white lips, and black teeth, it is no great temptation to go."

"Oh," said the marquess, "those people have been living there for half centuries, and, as you say, come back dried up, living mummies; but our residence will not extend over five or six years, and I am determined to maintain the character with a magnificence yet unknown even in that magnificent country."

"But then there is the voyage, dear," said Elizabeth; "that horrid ship — we shall be, how long?"

"Four months, perhaps," said the marquess; "but, we shall be together."

"Yes," said the lady, "that will be *very* agreeable; but — yes — dear me, only think, four months at sea. Is one sick all the time?"

"I trust not," said the marquess. "However, Elizabeth, I have another bit of news for you — this, however, is not quite settled — I am to have the blue riband."

"Indeed!" said Miss Oldham; "why, dear, how smart you *will* look."

"It is not so much for effect," said Lord Snowdon, who lived and would have died for effect alone, "as it is for the honour of belonging to an institution so illustrious, that I value it."

"But I thought, dear," said Miss Oldham, whose pertness partook so much of *naïveté*, and whose manner of delivering impertinences with an air of naturalness was so extremely puzzling as to leave the hearer in doubt whether she was the most impudent or the most innocent of her sex — "I thought you were in opposition to the government, — how comes it that they have given you these fine things?"

"Why, Elizabeth," said the marquess, who felt himself more puzzled by the young lady than he had been for some time by any body, "I — that is — the circumstances of the country seem to me to have so far changed their appearance, that I considered it a matter of duty to tender my support to the government, and ——"

"Oh!" said Elizabeth, bursting out into a loud laugh, 'why then, dear, you are in fact what they call a rat!"

"No, my love," said the marquess, "you are wrong there — you confound terms: I am glad of it — I hate a female politician; but the word rat is never applied as you have just now applied it — if a Tory becomes a Whig, he is called a rat; but, if a Whig has the good sense to become a Tory, he is never designated by that extremely coarse term."

"All I know is," said Miss Oldham, "that Lord ——"

"Never mind, my dear girl," said the marquess, "you need not illustrate your position by examples; all I wish you to believe is, that I have been actuated in my change of sentiments by nothing but a desire to do my duty to the country."

"You are a dear good creature," said Miss Oldham.

I am afraid," said Lord Snowdon, "that this elevation to vice-royalty — for we must *call* it nothing more — will turn your little head."

"Oh, no," said Miss Oldham; "I would much rather you had stuck to your old politics, and we had remained at Old Lionsden."

"I see," said the marquess, "it is the voyage that alarms you; but remember, we shall have a man of war to convey us — I am promised the Royal Tiger, an eighty gun line-of-battle ship, so that we shall have plenty of suitable accommodation. And then consider the patronage — secretaryships, and aides-du-campships, and all sorts of things; and I shall have my chamberlain, and my master of the horse, and my steward, and my comptroller of the household, all with white staves, and a household uniform; and then my body-guard, besides havildars, and subadars, and jemidars, and kitmagars, and half a hundred other officers, all in attendance upon the — marchioness — Elizabeth!"

Saying which, his lordship tenderly pressed her delicate hand, and snatched a kiss from her rosy lips.

"Who are going to be your aides-du-camp, dear?" said Miss Oldham.

"Why," said the marquess, "I have not made any

certain arrangements; indeed, I am pledged to take one or two gentlemen upon Downing Street recommendations."

"I should think it would be a good thing for Frederick Richardson, dear," said Miss Oldham; "he has no fortune, and he is remarkably clever and agreeable — he would be quite an acquisition out there."

"We'll see about it," said the marquess: "he never occurred to me. Perhaps he would not like to quit his regiment?"

"Oh, I am sure he'd go, and be delighted," said Miss Oldham; "shall I ask him?"

"My dear girl," said his Lordship, "have not I told you that the whole affair is at present a secret, a state secret?"

"I'm sure you may trust *him*," said Miss Oldham: "he is the least likely person in the world to tell any thing."

"We must not try him yet," said Lord Snowdon; "but I will not forget him: your wishes, Elizabeth, are commands."

"What an important personage I am," said Elizabeth, "to command the great governor-general of all the Indians!"

"You are a dear good girl," said the marquess, repeating the little affectionate playfulness which we before noticed.

It would have been quite impossible had there unluckily been any witnesses to this scene in Richmond's bowers, not to have recalled some pathetic lines which occur in a facetious song, once rendered extremely popular by the talent of Mathews, which contains the lamentations of Samson for the loss of his hair, while looking at, and listening to, the proudest peer of the realm, in the hands and under the control of our modern Delilah: her triumph, however, was as yet but half complete.

At dinner the marquess was all smiles and amiability; Lady Katherine as voluble as ever; Miss Macaw, seated between Mr. Richardson and his friend Losh, seemed to occupy Frederick; while the governor-general was devoting himself to Elizabeth, and Mr. Losh was behaving with great civility to Miss Cammomile, who dined at table,

and would have given one of her old eyes to have been any where else.

Things were going on very smoothly — so smoothly, that they are hardly worth recording — until, about the middle of dinner, Frederick Richardson, the pet of the family, called out in a distinct and audible voice, —

"Lord Snowdon — a glass of wine?"

Lord Snowdon returned no answer — the question was repeated.

"When the Marquess of Snowdon," said his lordship, "wishes to drink wine with Cornet Richardson, he will let him know it."

"Here broke out the Burrah Saab Bahauder — here came the pat of the lion which poor Lady Hester had so long anticipated. Mr. Richardson felt a momentary doubt what he should do, which of two courses to pursue — whether he should laugh it off, or take the missile nearest his hand, and, having flung it at his lordship's head, quit the house, and wait the consequences: the latter seemed the most natural and justifiable line to adopt; but as Cornet Richardson had been told by Miss Elizabeth Oldham, half an hour before dinner, the whole of the history of the marquess's appointment as governor-general, and her own scheme of making him one of the aides-du-camp, he resolved to take the pacific tone, in order not to quarrel with his excellency, but, on the contrary, to give him an idea of his passive qualifications for the situation in his household which he intended to fill.

The explosion threw an additional damp upon the party; but Lady Katharine was unquenchable, and the flow of her conversation continued in one unimpeded course.

In the evening, Lady Katharine, her daughter, and the marquess, seated themselves on a sofa in the drawing-room, while the cornet and his friend, and Miss Macaw, chaperoned by Miss Cammomile, retired to the billiard-room "out of the way" of the Illustrious, who was evidently in a bad humour.

His lordship, having communicated the history of his accession to office to his intended, felt it right to admit her mother into their confidence, convinced that the infirmity

of human nature would not suffer the daughter to conceal so important an event from her parent. Lady Katharine, who had but a very faint and confused idea of oriental geography, expressed a hope that there was no danger of yellow fever, and recounted several histories, none of which, of course, in the slightest degree related to the subject, and ended by an allusion to Mr. Burford, the tutor, as she always called him.

"Mr. Burford," said the marquess, "was in town yesterday, and dined with me."

"Did Lady Hester see him?" said Miss Oldham.

"No," replied Lord Snowdon, "she did not; but why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing, dear!" said the young lady.

"It is a curious enough question," said the marquess, "for I have parted with Mr. Burford finally, because he refused to see her."

"Parted!" said Lady Katharine — "how?"

"He has resigned the living which I gave him," said his lordship, "and has ceased to be my son's tutor."

"Dear me," said Lady Katharine, "how sudden! and for what did you say?"

"I wished him," said Lord Snowdon, "to see Hester: she has a high opinion of him, and a respect derived from the affection which her brother bears him; and I thought, perhaps, I might ascertain the real current of her feelings and whether she has formed any attachment which, in point of fact, caused the separation between us and Lord Elmsdale."

"And Mr. Burford would not undertake the task?" said Miss Oldham.

"No: he declined it," said the marquess.

"I think I could guess why," said Elizabeth.

"And so could I," said Lady Katharine.

"He puts it upon a general feeling of his not being justified," said Lord Snowdon: "he writes in a very high strain, and, I think, rather mistakes his position."

"He may put it upon what he pleases," said Elizabeth, "but I know what I know — only, we never tell tales out of school — do we, mamma?"

"No," said Lady Katharine. "I remember once — I was brought up at a great school — and Mr. Oglander whose daughter ——"

"My dear Lady Katharine," interrupted the marquess, 'I beg you a thousand pardons, but what is the circumstance connected with Mr. Burford that ——"

"You tell, mamma," said Elizabeth.

"Oh, I don't know that there is much to tell," said Lady Katharine: "I remember noticing — particularly, Elizabeth — don't you recollect? — it was the day after we had been to the fancy ball at Horseden — by the way that reminds me of what I heard yesterday from Cheltenham, where the Limpetts have been staying — old Mr Limpett is the man who ——"

"But, Lady Katharine — Mr. Burford?" said the marquess.

"Oh, I'll tell you, dear," said Elizabeth; "mamma has such a roundabout way of telling things: all we know — at least, all I know — is, that when I used to be so much with Hester, and Lord Malvern and Mr. Burford were going about with us, I used to notice how fond Hester seemed of him; and I remember saying to mamma that I thought some day we should hear of Hester's running away with him — that's all."

"All!" said the marquess, "all! — do you call it all? It is indeed all — for what more could be wanting to drive me mad? How blind, how foolishly blind, I must have been! Now I see the whole thing — now it opens upon me at once. Burford persuaded Malvern to stay away from the marriage because I proposed to him to perform the ceremony. Now I can account for the girl's agitation when his name was mentioned; now I can understand the affectionate intercourse between him and my son. Fool that I was! I had actually begun a letter insisting upon the impertinent coxcomb's retaining the living — humbling myself to the viper whom I have cherished to sting me in the tenderest part."

"Dear me, Lord Snowdon," said Lady Katharine, "I wish we had not mentioned it; for, after all, as I remember saying to old Mrs. Dando, when we were playing

whist at the Dowager Lady Slyman's — who, by the way, has sold her cottage in Sussex to Captain Smithson, the man who is going to be married to a niece of Lord Bamford's, by his second wife — for *my* part, I never say any thing ——"

"Madam," said the marquess, "you have said enough to drive me mad! — But why, Elizabeth, why did not you — you, who, situated as we are, ought to have no secrets from me — why did you not put me on my guard?"

"Why should I, dear?" said Miss Oldham; "I saw Lady Hester was going to be married to Lord Elmsdale — I concluded she had forgotten all about the tutor; and as I found her seemingly well pleased with the new match, I made a point of never alluding, in the slightest degree, to any thing that had occurred during the period of our greatest intimacy, when mamma and I were staying at Lionsden."

"True, dear, true," said the marquess: "what should you judge from but appearances? — and she never mentioned the man's name to you?"

"Never, in the remotest degree, alluded to him," said Elizabeth.

"It is strange, too, how she could have avoided it," said the marquess, "for I suppose she spoke constantly of her brother."

"Why," said Miss Oldham, colouring crimson — for she had not yet quite overcome the amiable weakness of blushing — "no — she did not talk much of him to *me*."

"That is singular," said Lord Snowdon, "and convinces me that her avoidance of the subject was a matter of design; she felt she was treading upon tender ground."

"I dare say she did," said Miss Oldham.

"However, Lord Snowdon," said Lady Katharine, "you must not fancy that we have any very strong grounds for this belief — I always think of what Mrs. Crawford used to say — she afterwards married Sir Simon Spoonbill, the methodistical baronet, who was thrown out of his phaeton, near Croydon, close by Purley, where Horne Tooke wrote his book. By the way, Horne Tooke ——"

"Has been in heaven these twenty years," said the

marquess, "where I sincerely wish Mr. Burford had been before him. However, to-morrow shall end all doubts upon this point; Lady Hester is sufficiently recovered to bear the scrutiny to which I am resolved myself to subject her; and ——"

"Perhaps," said Miss Oldham, "Mr. Burford may not object to converse with Lady Hester upon any other topic. Is he likely to call in Grosvenor Square to-day?"

This mischievous *inuendo* — for Elizabeth hated Lady Hester, because she knew Elizabeth's falseness — failed of effect. Lord Snowdon knew enough of Burford, however deeply he might be implicated in the love part of the affair, to be quite certain, that after having written the letter which he had that morning received, he would make no clandestine or covert approaches to his house. On his lips there were bitter words affecting Burford; but in his mind, although he was too proud to own it, a high opinion of the tutor's honour and integrity.

"No, Elizabeth," said the marquess, "I have no apprehensions of such a visit. Mr. Burford would not, under the circumstances, call on my daughter, and if he did, I think I know my daughter too well to believe that she would receive him."

The marquess had, however, received a blow — an unexpected blow — and prejudiced as he now was, and disappointed as he had been because Burford could not be brought to consider the preferment which he had bestowed upon him as a retainer for services, inconsistent with his character and incompatible with his feelings, he now felt convinced that the show of honourable indignation which he made in his letter was a mere pretence to get rid of the obligations under which he felt himself; while the affection which he professed for Lord Malvern was, in fact, the adulation of a flatterer, fawning upon the heir of the house, and securing, by the most undignified concessions to his will and wishes, his interest in promoting his ruinous connection with his sister.

Perhaps Miss Oldham had no seriously evil intentions in making these disclosures of her belief in Lady Hester's attachment to Burford; but malicious people might fancy

that the dislike of her present proceedings, which Lady Hester made no effort to conceal, and her consciousness that Lady Hester knew a secret which she dare not even whisper to her father, might have led her so to enrage the marquess against his child, that she might be induced, nay compelled, to keep silence upon the point concerning which Elizabeth most dreaded her. Miss Oldham little knew the awe in which Lady Hester stood of her father, and by the manner in which she managed him herself, could ill appreciate the timidity and caution with which others who had not the power of fascination like hers approached him.

Intentional or not, the deed was done — the fate of Lady Hester was sealed; and such was the eagerness, as well as violence of the marquess's fury, that he felt inclined to cry because so many hours must necessarily elapse before his rage could burst upon her — a rage increased in a tenfold degree from its justifiable force by the unpardonable circumstance of his having been himself blind to the circumstance, and the dupe, as he considered it, of his own child; never calculating that he himself had placed his children at an immeasurable distance from him, and that his constant efforts appeared to be directed to checking their advances and chilling their affections.

The marquess retired about eleven to the Star and Garter; and in about half an hour after his lordship's departure, the remaining members of the party huddled closely round a small table, where cold chickens, and fruit, and an agreeable sort of potation, compounded by Lady Katharine's butler, after an old family recipe, held them in gentle converse till considerably past one o'clock, when the cornet and his friend started for Hampton Court, and the ladies repaired to their respective apartments.

The difficulties which had, previously, so much occupied Lord Snowdon's mind with regard to Lady Hester, were now incalculably multiplied. To *his* eyes her marriage with Burford was ruin and degradation so deep and bitter, that the very idea was deadly. The more he considered her conduct, the more he was convinced of the

justness of Miss Oldham's view of the attachment — and what was he now about to do?

Burford had declared war — he had relinquished every thing which bound him to the family — and he, the head of that family, was about not only to cement a new connection, which would naturally alienate him from the care of his daughter, even if he staid in England, but was on the eve of quitting the country for several years, leaving her — although under the care of her aunt — at the mercy of her own affections, and the importunities of her lover.

This could not be. In the course of his sleepless night, he resolved that Lady Hester should accompany them to India. Insensible to the feelings of real attachment — versed perhaps in the ways of the world, but ignorant certainly of sentiments such as occupied poor Lady Hester's mind, he imagined that by taking her with him he should divert her thoughts from the object upon which they were so unfortunately placed; and even if he failed in achieving that end, he at least should have her within his reach, safe from the advances of the last man in the kingdom whom he would that she should marry.

That the future marchioness might object to this arrangement he did not doubt; but he thought that by conceding to her all the little points which she had made, he might secure this, to him, most important one. In fact, the affair of the frustrated wedding had made so much noise, that he felt it would not be a disagreeable retreat for his daughter from London society; and that when they returned it would be so far forgotten as to afford no serious ground for uneasiness, or any valid objection to other men of rank and fortune who might wish to come forward as her suitor.

In order to carry his point, he resolved to nominate, according to Miss Oldham's desire, Mr. Frederick Richardson one of his personal staff. He felt that this young man had behaved extremely well on the preceding evening, and had borne his gentle rebuke with great propriety. Upon him there could be little difficulty in prevailing to eat long-kept eggs and the drumsticks of turkeys; and he was an amusing person; and the marchioness liked him; and so

Cornet Richardson was already, as far as his excellency's intentions went, gazetted in the Bengal Hukaru, A. D. C. to his excellency the governor-general.

It was not until daylight that sleep closed the noble marquess's eyes; and when he awoke and rose from his bed, he felt little refreshed by the fitful slumber which during the early part of the morning had fallen upon him. He was restless — dissatisfied — angry — and what to him was worse than all, humiliated by the circumstances which had come to his knowledge.

One person most specially had incurred his anger — poor Anne Everingham — his own cousin too; to be sure it was a cousinship far removed; but that *she*, one of his house, to whom the honour of the family ought to have been naturally and inherently dear; that *she* should have connived at the grovelling attachment was most annoying — that she did connive at it he was sure, from the anxiety of Lady Hester to have her always with her; from the nature of the conversation in which she had engaged with Lord Elmsdale in the afternoon of the wedding-day; and from the soft and considerate manner in which she treated Burford at dinner on the following evening. Her, he should forthwith expel — another night should not pass over her head in Grosvenor Square — he could not endure a further association with her — he would not suffer his child to be longer exposed to the contamination of her society.

He breakfasted: the day was gloomy — well suited to his feelings. He walked to Lady Katharine's, and ordered his cabriolet to be there at half past one; he was welcomed as usual with the smiles of Elizabeth, and greeted by the shrill tones of her mamma.

The conversation had been general for some time, and the marquess had determined not to touch upon his plan of taking Lady Hester with him to India till the last moment, and when, as he hoped, he should have secured the gratitude of Elizabeth by his attention to all her wishes, so that she might not interpose any objection to his project — at length he said,—

"Elizabeth, I have determined about your friend Mr.

Richardson: of course nothing is to be said of it yet; but the moment my appointment is announced, you may announce to *him* that he is one of my aides-du-camp."

"Now that *is* a dear," said Miss Oldham: "is not he, mamma?"

"I am only too happy, Elizabeth," said the marquess, "to show you how anxious I am to please you."

"Now, mamma," said Elizabeth, "I don't think I *can* do what we were talking of."

"What is that, Lady Katharine," said the marquess.

"Why," said Lady Katharine, "I really don't know that I ought to say any thing about it. It was one of dear Mr. Oldman's maxims, which he learned from his grandfather, whose daughter ——"

"Yes, ma'am, I know, said the marquess, "but *you* have something to say."

"It is about Mr. Richardson," said Miss Oldham.

"Oh!" said the marquess; "well, let me hear."

"Why," said Lady Katharine, "Mr. Richardson is one of five sons: his grandmother was the cousin of the old bishop of that place where the Waterperries lived, who afterwards went to Berkshire; and old Mr. Waterperry, I remember, died of a fever, which he caught by attending the trials at Newbury, where, by the way ——"

"I beg your pardon," said the marquess, "but my cabriolet is at the door, and I must be in town by a little after two."

"Well, what I have to say is," continued Lady Katharine, "the eldest son of old Mr. Richardson is married to a cousin ——"

"Yes, mamma," said Elizabeth, "but 'dear' is in a hurry, so I will tell him. It is the third son we want to speak to you about: he is in the church, without the least possible chance of preferment; he has two curacies nine miles apart, and not a hope of getting any thing more. We were thinking, after you were gone last night, as you told us that Mr. Burford had resigned the living of — what is the place?"

"Silgrove," said the marquess, watching the beautiful

animation of Elizabeth's countenance as she was expatiating in favour of a second Mr. Richardson.

"Ah, Silgrove," said Elizabeth; "and we were saying, that if you had nobody particular to give it to, it would be *such* a kindness to let poor dear Mr. Richardson's brother have it."

"I did intend to offer it to the minister," said the marquess.

"Oh, but you need not give *him* any thing more," said the *naïve* Elizabeth.

"No," said Lady Katharine: "I remember once, in the time of Mr. Pitt, I was staying down at Broadstairs that year, and Lord ——"

"Yes, ma'am," said the marquess; "but about th living — I will see about it — I will not say no."

"And so, dear, you wo'n't say yes?" said Miss Oldham, placing the fairest hand that ever was seen upon the marquess's shoulder — a prettier epaulette could not be imagined.

"I will say yes, if you really wish it," said the marquess.

"Indeed, indeed I do!" said the charming girl, with increased animation.

"Well, then, let it be so," said the marquess; "but of this let me entreat you to say nothing, not even to Mr. Richardson, till you hear from me; because, if there should be a point made about it, I must postpone your friend's preferment to some other opportunity. And now, till to-morrow, adieu."

"Good-by, dear," said Miss Oldham, rewarding her intended for all his kindnesses, in the warmest and most gracious manner possible.

"Oh! what a horrid day," exclaimed Lady Katharine, who had looked out of the window during the last farewell of her daughter and her future son-in-law. "Lord Snowdon, had not you better have a close carriage? It pours, absolutely pours, with rain."

"No, thank you," said Lord Snowdon; "I prefer the cab. Adieu! to-morrow I dine with you, and I dare say I shall have some news for you."

'Take care, and don't catch cold," said Lady Katharine; "I remember Dr. Buckskin telling me — the man who cured the pope of the sciatica, got the golden spur, and was afterwards knighted by the king for ——"

In the midst of this speech the marquess escaped, and jumped into his cabriolet with all the grace and agility of a youth. The impatient horse, tired of pawing the ground, sprang forward, and in a moment the Illustrious was out of sight.

In society, half the pride of Lord Snowdon melted down by the natural warmth of association, and the gilding rubbed off by collision with his equals, or those who, at least in the same houses and same rooms with him, considered themselves so; but when he was out in the streets and the roads, his dignity became as stiff and important as ever. His air and manner, the sovereign contempt with which he deigned to look at the people whom he passed, and the entire satisfaction which possessed him as he drove the finest horses London could produce, and the best turned-out equipage that rattled through its streets, were beyond imitation, as they were without precedent.

In this mood of mightiness, his lordship was driving at a slapping pace across Barnes Common, when his horse shied at a donkey, who was very wisely, and by no means like a jackass, standing up out of the rain under a hedge. The suddenness of the shock snapped the shaft of the cabriolet, and the career of his Excellency the Governor General Bahauder, K.G., was suddenly stopped, with no other damage than two or three kicks against the floor of the cab, from the heels of the proud and spirited animal that was drawing it. The rain was coming down in torrents.

"Shaft broken, my lord," said the tiger.

"What the deuce is to be done?" said the marquess; "not a house near — no umbrella?"

"No, my lord," said the boy. "It's the worst place, too, as it could have happened in, my lord," said the man, "for there's no house near."

"To be sure. What's this thing coming?" said his lordship.

"It's the Richmond hondibus, my lord."

"Oh! mercy on us — is there any body in it?" said the marquess; who began to feel that rain is no respecter of persons.

"Town, sir, town!" said the fellow on the step of the door; "plenty of room."

"My lord, I think you had better get in," said the tiger.

"Well — I — here, open the door," said the marquess, who certainly never had before seen the inside of an omnibus, and never expected to have been driven to such an expedient. However, it saved him from the rain, from cold, rheumatism, and all the "ills that flesh (even that of the Plinlimmons) is heir to," and might be immortalised in history, as having been graced with the presence of the greatest governor-general that ever was destined to govern India.

The marquess stepped in, and the conductor gave the word "All right;" but this was done so soon after the admission of his lordship into the vehicle, and he was so long picking out a clean place to sit down upon, that the jerk of the hearse threw his lordship forward into the lap of the fattest woman that ever was seen out on a caravan at a fair, who, unfortunately, was carrying a jar of pickled onions on her knee, which was upset by the marquess's tumble, and in its fall, saturated the front of his lordship's waistcoat and stock with its fragrant juice.

The marquess made a thousand well-bred apologies, and was got up upon his legs by the exertions of the fat woman, whose struggles to rescue herself from the imposing weight of nobility materially assisted the efforts of a good-natured dirty little man in the corner, and a thin spare woman, who was carrying a bantum-cock and three hens in a basket to London, having upon her other hand a large-faced child, with great blue eyes, and a cold in its head. It wore a brown skin cap, with a gold band round it, while a green and white net comforter was twisted round its chin and body; its dress, generally, bearing very strong evidence that the dear little thing was an extremely bad traveller.

Near the door, and over whose shins the marquess first

tumbled upon getting in, was placed a stout, blue-aproned market-gardener; and opposite to him, a smartish looking man, with a Mosaic gold chain round his neck, and a bunch of oily curls coming out from under his hat just over his ear — he was the dandy of the party.

Off went the omnibus — rattle went all the windows — slap went the weather boards — bang went the axle trees; and away went the whole concern, at a rate and with a noise, of which the marquess, till that moment, had but a very faint conception.

The dirty dandy in the corner, as soon as he saw the involuntary contortions of poor Lord Snowdon's countenance, as the huge thing bumped up and down, and twisted first one way and then another, began to affect a similar distaste for the conveyance; and to mark his sympathy with the new arrival, forthwith bumped himself up close to him. He looked at the Governor-General Bahauder for a moment or two, and then pulling out a sort of whitey-brown paper funnel, which did duty for a snuff-box, offered it to the marquess.

"Do you snuff, sir?" said the dandy.

"No, I am obliged to you," replied the marquess.

"Have you been down at Richmond, starring?" asked the dandy.

"Sir!" said Lord Snowdon.

"I mean," said the man, "have you been acting a few?"

"I don't exactly understand you," said the marquess.

"Oh! come, governor, none of your nonsense — no tricks upon travellers!" said the dandy.

"Governor!" thought the marquess; "what the deuce can he mean?"

"I think," continued the stranger, "I have smoked a a pipe or two before now along with you in the Coal Hole."

"Sir!" said the marquess, "I never smoked a pipe, or was in a coal-hole, in the whole course of my existence."

"I say, governor, now you *are* coming it strong," said the monster; "you think I don't know you, eh; O. P. and P. S.? I say, what was you a-doing with Mrs. Linnegar

in the Greenwich coach last Thursday week? — eh! — I don't know whether you ever smokes — I smoked you."

"I think, sir, you are mistaken," said the marquess.

"What! mistaken in the cut of your jib?" said the dirty dandy; "no, governor, that's no go — there can't be two sich as you."

"I fancy you will find that you are in error, sir," said Lord Snowdon, beginning to boil.

"What! my Solomon Lob," said the exhilarated fiend "you don't mean to deny yourself to *me!* No, no — whether you have smoked pipes and been in the Coal Hole, I wo'n't argue; but I know this, I have paid many a shilling to see you, and never grudged a penny of them."

'Sir," said the marquess, "I repeat you are mistaken."

And what made these dignified replies of his lordship more ridiculous, was the fact, that in consequence of the noise of the carriage, he was obliged to bawl them out at a pitch of his voice, which, upon no other occasion, he ever condescended to adopt; whilst, by the irregular bumpings and thumpings of the vehicle, his lordship's graceful attitudes were reduded to something very like the uncontrollable antics of a stuffed Punch in a puppet show.

"I tell you once for all," said the dandy, "it's no manner of use your trying to gammon me, Buggins is Buggins all the world over — on the stage, or in it."

"Sir," said the marquess, "I am not Mr. Buggins, and I never saw that person in the whole course of my existence."

"Then if you never did," said the facetious passenger, "I'd advise you to look at your own sweet countenance in the looking-glass, the moment you get to your lodgings, and you may save your two shillings for paying to o to see him in the play."

The horrid monster having here worked up the conversation to a climax, Lord Snowdon hoped he might remain at rest. But no — it had scarcely ceased when the woman on his other side, believing him "quite the gentleman," said, "Pray, sir, are you a judge of cocks and hens?"

"Ma'am!" said the marquess.

"Because I knows nothing of them myself, and I'm afraid perhaps this basket is too small for 'm," said the woman, 'they keeps a-pecking and a-digging at one another so."

"Ma'am," replied his lordship, "I know nothing about fowls."

Here a truce seemed to have been agreed upon. The omnibus stopped at the Red Lion, Putney, and the sudden silence of its sonorous machinery which ensued, induced a corresponding quiet in the passengers — the surrounding noise having hitherto encouraged noise in the passengers. All that happened during the check was, that the dirty dandy resumed his seat near the door, and took the opinion of the man on the steps as to their fellow-passenger being Buggins or not.

After a short delay, during which several aristocratic carriages rolled by — at which periods the marquess adopted the celebrated system of *ostrichism*, and hid his head — the omnibus rattled on towards town. At Walham Green, two tall scraggy girls from a boarding school,

"Sickly, smiling, gay, young, and awkward,"

were poked in. A gentleman with very red mustachios was picked up at the Queen's Elm gate; and a poulterer's boy, with a couple of skinned rabbits in a tray, was added to the party at the corner of Sloane Street, the said rabbits being on their way back to a poulterer's in Duke Street, St. James's, because they were not fresh.

Ah! thought Lord Snowdon, if my old friend Noah had had such company as this in the ark, I am sure he would have preferred death to security in such society, and have jumped into the flood. Away they went, up the hill in the outward of St. George's, Hanover Square, upon which thousands of pounds have been spent, each thousand making it worse than it was before, tossing and tumbling up hillocks and down hollows, equalled only in effect by that produced by the unbreaking billows of the Bay of Biscay upon the bows and quarters of a crank craft.

At the top of St. James's Street the caravan stopped. The day had cleared up; the pavement was dry. The king was in town; there were many people about. Lord

Snowdon just peeped through the windows, and saw groups collected — men he knew. *Here* it was clear he could not get out — whither should he go? how far — what place was safe? At length he resolved upon going the whole journey to the Bank, so that he might emerge in the city, and then enveloping himself in a hackney coach, reach the habitable part of town, without fear of discovery.

"Any body for White Oss Cellar?" said the man on the steps. Out went the dirty dandy, the man with the apron, and the boy with the rabbits. But their places were instantly supplied by a portly gentleman, lugging in a small-sized green garden-engine with a fan spout, and three fishing-rods, which he had just bought at the corner of Albemarle Street, and a fond mother, who had provided herself with a heap of toys for her six children.

Still, the marquess kept peering out of his prison — nobody saw him — and it was pleasant to peep through the loop-holes thus unobserved. In a few minutes all was right, but the pavement in Piccadilly was up; it was necessary, therefore, that the huge machine should go down St. James's Street; and so it did; but short was its progress in that line of march — all the bumpings and thumpings which its rapid course in the earlier part of its journey had excited now were to be compensated for. The driver smacked his whip, the horses obeyed the sound, when bang went something, and in an instant the whole fabric came down with a crash like thunder, exactly in front of White's.

The shrieks of the women, the cries of the men, the noise of the fall, all combined to attract a thousand spectators. Fifty heads were out of Crockford's coffee-room; all the guardsmen rushed into the balcony; and in the bow-window of White's itself, which was instantly thrown up, were heard the well-known voices of the leaders of the *clique*, in a sort of war-whoop, which, like the whistle of Rhoderick Dhu, roused the whole clan to observe the dreadful *dénouement*.

In detail were the passengers extricated. The dear little boarding-school girls jumped out first; the fat man with his garden-engine stuck in the door-way, and was only ejected by the ponderosity of the still fatter woman with

what she called her "inion jar" clasped like a lovely baby to her bosom; the lady with the toys was trampled under foot; the sick child was jammed under the dirty man in the corner, and the thin woman, who took care of it, getting anxious about its fate, unwillingly abandoned the poultry; and when the Most Noble the Marquess of Snowdon, K.G. and governor-general of India, emerged, amidst the cries of "Take care of the old gentleman," he came out without his hat, with a fine bantam cock perched upon his head, and a couple of fuzzy-legged hens roosting upon his shoulders.

A shout of laughter rent the sky — the little boys laughed, the old women laughed, and the fat man with the garden engine stood and laughed himself nearly into a fit.

The instant Lord Snowdon was seen thus "roosted upon," half a dozen men ran out of White's to rescue and shelter him; but this made bad worse: and though having housed him, as a matter of hospitality, he was yet, politically speaking, upon the tenderest ground, and did not yet belong to them. His gratitude was, in his opinion, as painful as any thing could be, until a hoarse demand from the conductor of the omnibus, for his two *shillins*, made in a tone, which implied a desire upon his lordship's part to get off without paying, convinced him that there are still lower depths of misery than the lowest.

"The colonel's" green carriage was at the door of White's, which, with his usual kindness, he offered to the suffering marquess, who, availing himself of the favourable opportunity, threw himself into it, and anathematising every thing upon the face of the earth, which had contributed to this most signal discomfiture, hastened home to Grosvenor Square, to begin a performance of a much more serious nature.

CHAPTER XIII.

It may easily be conceived that the combination of circumstances, and "untoward events" which had occurred to the noble marquess, subsequently to his acquisition of

the important intelligence which he had received from Miss Oldham, with respect to the hitherto hidden prepossession or affection (as he feared it might be), which his daughter felt for his son's tutor, had not rendered him a particularly agreeable companion any where.

He was too much of an adept in looks and manners, and infinitely too sensitive upon such points, not to perceive that the interest which the men at White's had affected to take in his rescue from the wreck of the ponderous caravan partook infinitely more of the ridiculous than the sympathetic, and that not one of the whole party present felt any thing really and truly, but the most malicious gratification at an *exposé*, which, however lightly other men of equal rank and pretensions might have been disposed to consider it, they were well assured, would be to him a subject of constant and continued mortification.

While he was with them, he felt his only policy was to appear deceived by their civilities and gratified by their attentions; but all this forced suavity curdled as he proceeded homewards: and fraught as he was with serious anger, combining in its character grief immeasurable, and vexation incalculable, he worked himself up into a state of fury and desperation, such as, with all his extraordinary vindictiveness of pride and violence of temper, he seldom permitted himself to be seen in.

Arrived at home, he hastily opened and read his letters, one of which was, as he expected, from Downing Street, begging him to call there at six o'clock, after the return of the ministers from St. James's. This gratified him for the moment: he anticipated the communication which he was to receive, and felt, at least, that however much his private affairs, and the politics of his domestic circle, might be disarranged and entangled, in the more exalted course of public life he might be enabled to compensate, in his own person and character, for the degradation and debasement which his unfortunate daughter had incurred by her attachment to a person, who, however respectable in his way, he felt to be nothing more than a menial of his household, somewhat higher in rank than his house steward or his confidential *valet*.

Little did poor Lady Hester anticipate the storm that was so soon to burst upon her devoted head! little did Miss Everingham, who was sitting reading to her, when the marquess arrived, imagine that her own history, as connected with his lordship, would be terminated before she had completed the volume upon which she was engaged! and least of all did either of them foresee the magnitude of the change which one short hour was to work in all the prospects of their future lives.

After inquiring for Lady Hester, the illustrious man proceeded to the boudoir, where the victims of his ire were seated. He entered the room pale as death, his lips quivering with rage; he closed the door, cast a withering look upon them both, but spoke not.

"My dearest father," said Lady Hester, "what on earth is the matter? — are you ill?"

"Mad!" said his lordship; "stand from me — touch me not — my hatred may drive me to some tremendous crime."

"For Heaven's sake!" said Miss Everingham, throwing down her book, "what ——"

"Let me hear no talk of heaven from your polluted lips," said Lord Snowdon; "lips that have lent their aid to the ruin, the absolute ruin, of this wretched and unhappy girl."

"Why call your child wretched and unhappy?" said Lady Hester.

"Child!" exclaimed the marquess, "I disown you — I cast you from me! I repeat to you my injunction not to come near me. I will not curse you if I can command myself; but no endearments, no palliation, no tears — no, none of these — can avail you! we are parted, madam, for ever — ay, for ever!"

"At least, my father," said Lady Hester, "let me know my crime."

"Father!" said the marquess, sneeringly, "I disbelieve it — I cannot be the father of so base and mean a being. I am aware of the influence of a confidante — a female friend — friend! what a profanation! — I know that a mean sycophant, a poor dependent, may, for her own in-

terest, be led to encourage hopes, and tamper with feelings, which she herself in all probability has first excited; but, by heavens, the thing is ended here! What future course to pursue, I do not clearly see — but for the present it is done — I am decided."

"Lord Snowdon," said Miss Everingham, bursting into tears, "I cannot misunderstand your coarse allusions: how have I deserved this outrage?"

"Ask that wretch whom I once believed my daughter!" said the marquess; "*she* knows the secret confidence which exists between you; she knows, as I well thought she did, the tone and character of the conversation which, with a fiend-like zeal, you undertook to hold with Lord Elmsdale on the wedding-day. Wedding, did I say! upon that day when I, and all that are mine, were held up to the sneering ridicule of the vulgar, and made the common town talk of the mob! Yes, ma'am, *you* it was, who taught that whining, puling mushroom of the peerage, to believe his declared bride engaged in heart to some other object! Ma'am, do not presume to contradict me — I will not be opposed! I know what I say; and although I now announce to you that this day is the last of your residence in my house, and your association with that degraded girl, I wish that our eternal separation should not be marked by any scene which, in the public eye, might give increased effect to what has already occurred."

"Indeed," said Lady Hester, "you wrong her. If there is blame, I alone am culpable; and yet I know not what I have done. Have I ever disobeyed your wishes? Did I refuse Lord Elmsdale? Did I dismiss him?"

"What, Hester," said Lord Snowdon, "do you dare to bandy words with me? Do you presume, even by implication, to charge *me* with having driven the man away? Why did I, because, knowing the fact of your disgraceful love for another, he felt himself preparing to do me a favour in rescuing your character from obloquy and shame by completing a contract to which he knew you were an unwilling party."

"Father," said Lady Hester, falling on her knees, and catching his hand, "do not treat me thus! I have not

sinned against you: I am ready now to fulfil your wishes. Spare me — spare me! I would die for you, if you required it."

"Your death," said the marquess, "would be more desirable to me than to see you live disgraced as you must be eternally."

"For shame, Lord Snowdon!" said Miss Everingham. "I am a weak and humble woman; but I protest, in the name of the God that made me, against such language. She is your child — devoted to you — without a thought beyond obedience to your will; who, by no act, no word, no thought, has evinced rebellion to your wishes; and, as a Christian woman, I will not let her stay to hear your curses."

"Miss Everingham," said the marquess, "how dare you venture to use this language here — to me — in my own house? Have I not a right to correct my child? Have I not a right to speak my feelings and express my anger? I ask you — you, ma'am — I even condescend to ask *you*, what would your feelings be — if you can imagine such a circumstance — were you in my place, after having trained up a daughter in the course which the child of such a person ought to run in life, if you found all your hopes blighted, your expectations thwarted, and your labour for her advantage brought to nought, by her encouragement — secret encouragement — yes, Miss Everingham — deceitful, secret encouragement of a grovelling passion for a menial in her father's house?"

"Menial!" said Lady Hester.

"Yes, menial! the hireling tutor of your brother!" said the marquess. "Affect no shame, feign no surprise, — I know it all. Hence the fine feeling which prompted the fellow to resign his preferment and starve — as, please God, if I can influence his career in life, he shall — rather than soothe away the difficulties which interposed between your feelings and your duty; — hence the refusal of your brother, under his influence, to *honour* your marriage with his presence; — hence all the evils which have fallen upon me, and which now it is mine to revenge!"

"Oh!" said Lady Hester, "if I could but reach your

heart — if I could but tell you how deceived you are in both of us!"

"Both of ye!" said, or rather screamed, the marquess "both of you! What! are you coupled, even in thought — paired, even in imagination? Both of ye! What! Lady Hester Plinlimmon, the daughter of the Marquess of Snowdon, the daughter of a house, whose line of noble ancestry is registered unbroken for ages, coupled with Mr. Charles Burford, the son of a country curate, hired and paid wages to teach her brother Latin! Is it come to this?"

"In justice," said Lady Hester, who seemed to rally from her wretchedness, "tell me, sir, to whom are you indebted for this base, this cruel falsehood?"

"Falsehood!" said Lord Snowdon — "what! do you attempt to deny it? Do you wish to deceive me — to cajole me?"

"Did I not prove," said Lady Hester, "the falsehood of such a story by consenting to marry Lord Elmsdale?"

"Your consent," replied her father, "rendered all that preceded it the more atrocious. Yes! you did consent; and unless your bodily weakness had not made evident the wicked concealment of your mind, you would have ventured to give your hand to one, while your heart was devoted to another."

"If it were so," said Lady Hester, "and I had, in obedience to a parent's command, become the wife of Lord Elmsdale, assure yourself that I should have done so honestly and conscientiously. I have not, sir, been so ill brought up, nor have I profited so little from the counsels of those to whom you have consigned me, as not to know, and knowing it, to do my duty. If I had formed an affection — improvident as you describe it — religion would have taught me that I was to sacrifice it to my filial obedience — I should have done so."

"This is too clear!" said the marquess. "Wretched girl, you have confessed ——"

"I do confess!" said Lady Hester. "I am ready to die, if you wish it; but I will not conceal that in which I saw no shame. What you have heard, sir, may be true;

but as I tell you, and as Anne can tell you — she whom so much you have traduced — it was conquered and overcome."

"Anne traduced!" said his lordship; "no, Hester, she is not traduced. I know the line she has pursued — that has been told me too: she has acted the part — consistent, perhaps, with her dependent and expectant state — of go-between — confederate — letter-carrier — conveyer of messages: I know it."

"My lord," said Miss Everingham, "it is false — false as the fiend who thus has poisoned your mind against your child."

"Fiend!" said the marquess, "who dares pronounce that word? She who told me this knows not the meaning of a falsehood. Shocked and disgusted as she has been at what she saw passing in my house when she was here, she felt it a duty to undeceive the man who is so soon to be her husband."

"Elizabeth Oldham!" exclaimed Lady Hester. "Can *she* have said all this? Oh! be still, my heart — be still, my tongue! Did she not tell you more? Did she not say that when I betrayed such feelings as you charge me with, she herself ——"

"Be silent, I command you," said the marquess. "On the peril of my curse be silent. Dare but to utter one syllable derogatory to the character, the heart, the mind, of your future mother-in-law, and the heaviest malediction that a father can pronounce shall fall upon your devoted head! It is to the aversion of your heartless brother that I am indebted for your marked hatred of her who once was your friend. It was to rescue you from the privations which you must undergo when a mistress of the house assumes her dominion, that I so particularly urged your previous marriage — this you have frustrated. The fellow upon whom you have fixed your affections is now a beggar: pride — mean, paltry pride — and what is more contemptible? — has induced him to throw up a piece of preferment, of which, having given it him, I could not myself have deprived him — he has quitted your brother, and he

is a beggar. Now, madam, hear me: — in this house you cannot and shall not remain after my marriage."

Lady Hester burst into a flood of tears, and dropped her head upon Miss Everingham's shoulder.

"Ay! faint — weep — *die*, if you will," said Lord Snowdon, in a tone of fiend-like malignity; "I cast you off; I utterly abandon you! Some asylum must be found for you; but not in the society of that dear friend! And where shall that asylum be? who, when I have cast you off, will shelter or protect you? who will be your champion then?"

"I WILL!" said a voice of thunder; "I, sir — her brother — her devoted brother, who, thanks to Heaven, is here to shield and save her."

"Malvern! my son!" exclaimed Lord Snowdon.

"Not your son, my lord," said Malvern, "unless Hester is your daughter. I came to England the moment I heard of the failure of her marriage, because I thought Lord Elmsdale might have acted unfairly, and that it would have been my duty to call him to account. I have been satisfied on that point before I came here. I came to England to vindicate my sister against dishonour: thank Heaven, I am here, my lord, to protect her from tyranny."

"What!" said Lord Snowdon, pausing even in his rage until he had closed the door, in order that the violence of the discussion might not produce an effect upon the establishment, "do you mean to uphold my child in her rebellion against me?"

"I mean, sir," said Lord Malvern, "to do no such thing; far be it from me to uphold in her a disposition which I trust you have never discovered in any conduct of mine. Hester has not rebelled; she has sacrificed all to duty and obedience. Unwillingly, I have heard the greater part of the discussion which has passed between you; and I pronounce, from all I know — not, sir, from hearsay evidence, but from my own knowledge — that her conduct has been exemplary; but I also know, that after what has transpired within the last ten minutes, that however fit Miss Oldham may be for the *wife* of Lord Snowdon, she

is the last person in the world who may be trusted as the mother of his children."

"Ah! there again," said the marquess, "Miss Oldham is to be dragged forward in the discussion."

"Not so," said Lord Malvern. "Miss Oldham has volunteered her services, and therefore rendered herself obnoxious to our remarks; she is safe as far as I am concerned, although my duty is at odds with my honour: my sister, sir, must never be subject to her control."

"She will not be under her control, sir," replied the marquess; "of *that* I will take especial care."

"My lord," said Lord Malvern, "this is the most painful moment of my existence: I am forced into conduct which I feel that nothing but the extremest case could justify. I have heard the denunciation of Hester from your own lips: she is blameless — faultless. The time is past when she may trust to your kindness, or expect your protection; your heart is alienated from her. I ——"

"Sir," said the marquess, in a voice of thunder, "do you recollect that you are my son?"

"I do," said Lord Malvern, "but I also recollect that she is my sister; and by the sacred memory of our mother — lost to us before we could duly appreciate her virtues and her merits — I will protect her to the death! Father, thus I appeal to you: the page of history is not a blank — the deeds of other days are there recorded — the request my dying mother made with respect to Hester I will see fulfilled; and the first step to its accomplishment is her removal from this house."

"What, sir," said the marquess, "do you presume to say that you will drag your sister from under my protection?"

"No, sir," said Lord Malvern; "but if she feels as I do, she will voluntarily leave a house which must so shortly cease to be her home."

"Oh, Malvern," said Lady Hester, "what course on earth can I pursue?"

"Obey your father, madam!" said the marquess.

"She will obey you, sir," said Lord Malvern, "in quitting your roof. You have threatened her with expul-

sion: this she must not at any rate endure; but to endure it, in order that she may give place to Miss Oldham, is more than I can suffer."

"Stay here she shall!" said the marquess.

"If she please she shall," said Lord Malvern; "she is of age to judge for herself; her fortune is, I believe, at her own disposal, and her own command."

"Indeed!" said the marquess, who was particularly sensitive on this particular point.

"And if she feel disposed to relieve herself from the state of thraldom in which she is at this moment, I will protect and vindicate her, as I have done before."

"And present her as a wife, perhaps, to your tutor!" said Lord Snowdon.

"Mr. Burford," replied Lord Malvern, "is *not* my tutor — he is my friend — an independent friend — his disinterestedness is proved — his honour is established. Upon that point Hester may act as she pleases. Whatever else may happen, I repeat, the memory of her mother shall not be disgraced in her person."

"Do you imagine," said Lord Snowdon, "that the decencies and decorum of society would be best consulted by your withdrawing your sister from her father's house, unattended, unaccompanied by any body but her brother?"

"Miss Everingham, sir," said Lord Malvern," has received the same unqualified announcement of your determination that this day shall be the last of her residence here: she who has been for so many years the companion and protectress selected by yourself for Hester, will, I doubt not, continue that protection and association. I am convinced that the course I propose will be the best for all parties: the future marchioness and Hester never can meet again. For myself, I most distinctly decline any communication with her; therefore let it be as I suggest, and let us remove from a scene in which our presence cannot be desirable."

"Malvern," said Lord Snowdon, whose rage had subsided into something like mortification, at having gone too far in his violence, "I admit your dislike to this second marriage to be natural."

"On that subject, sir," said Lord Malvern, "not a word — you are free to choose, and free to act upon that choice; and Heaven send you happy. And remember, sir, I am pledged to contribute my share to the favourable completion of all the necessary arrangements of the marriage: all I feel justified in insisting upon, is the security of my sister from a repetition of the scene which has just been acted, and that point I unequivocally make the condition of my implicit acquiescence in every other particular connected with the affair."

"I must terminate this discussion," said his lordship; "I have other affairs which command my immediate attention. I have been ruffled — agitated — acted upon by a thousand contending influences — to-morrow I will endeavour ——"

"To-morrow!" said Lord Malvern; "if I am not mistaken in what I have heard, Lady Katharine Oldham and her daughter are coming hither to-morrow; besides, to-morrow will not ——"

"Malvern," said the marquess, "take your own course. I am in your hands, sir, and you know it. I leave you — act as you please; for, by my hopes of mercy, I will not retract a syllable of what I have said. If we are to part, let it be so. You can scarcely imagine that any sacrifice on your part would compensate to me for humbling myself before my children. On another point I am inflexibly determined: Miss Everingham and I meet no more — to her I attribute all the evils that have fallen on my house. I need add nothing. I shall return by seven o'clock, and I leave the conduct of the intervening period to yourselves. But, remember, whatever may be the result of your deliberations, I am resolved, at all hazards, to maintain the dignity, and sustain the character of the lady, who is so shortly to be my wife."

Saying which, the marquess quitted the room to fulfil his engagement in Downing Street, believing, that let what might be the result of all that had occurred, the safest way of maintaining his importance was to leave the assembled party, so that the onus of acting in the emergency should rest upon them.

The course which they were to pursue, or, rather, the choice they were to make, was a difficult one ; the responsibility Lord Malvern was ready to incur, tremendous. Yet it was quite evident that war was already openly proclaimed between the insidious heartless Elizabeth and her suffering former friend and future daughter-in-law. Their continued association was out of the question.

Lady Hester explained to her brother, now more than ever endeared to her by his zealous exertions in her behalf, how bitterly she felt the abruptness of Miss Oldham, and the unfeeling observations of her loquacious parent. It was evident that the next day must bring them into collision ; and, after the past storm and its consequences, their meeting seemed to be impossible. In fact, it was evident that the separation of the family, an event which would naturally have occurred in a few days, had actually taken place. Indeed, Lord Malvern's exhortations to his sister no longer to endure the cruelty of her father, excited and called into action by his future wife, were successfully seconded by Miss Everingham, who declared that, let Lady Hester stay or not, no person on earth should induce *her*, after the coarse language and unfeeling conduct of Lord Snowdon, to remain another hour in his house.

What proceedings resulted from the debate which ensued, the reader will discover presently. It is not our business to listen to all the arguments which were adduced on either side by the different parties. All we want to ascertain is, the effect produced by those arguments, and the consequences which ensued. While this discussion is in progress, we must follow the marquess on his ministerial visit.

It would be extremely difficult to describe, and, perhaps, equally so to appreciate, the state of Lord Snowdon's mind and feelings as he paced the pavement towards Westminster. His indignation at the manner in which his daughter had misplaced her affections was not in the slightest degree modified by the dutiful obedience with which she had conquered her inclinations. Nor was his anger against his son at all qualified by the sneering tone

in which, as it appeared to him, he refrained from retaliating upon Miss Oldham for her communication of Lady Hester's early partiality for Mr. Burford; but, least of all, was his detestation of Miss Everingham moderated by the resolute tone and determined manner in which she had "dared" to express her feelings.

At any other moment of his life the scene in Grosvenor Square would, in all probability, have produced a catastrophe infinitely more serious than his departure from it; but just at this crisis — the very day on which all his hopes of controul and domination upon the great scale were to be realised, he *could* not afford to waste so much of his energies upon his private affairs, however important and interesting, as he might have spared from the public upon any other occasion. Of his governor-generalship he was certain; so far he might have set his mind at rest had it not been for the doubt thrown over the acquisition of the garter — the personal promise, which the minister had to overcome — that kept him in a state of frightful suspense; for, in point of fact, of the two, if he had to abandon one of his objects, the personal decoration, derived from so illustrious a source, would have been the favourite.

In a turmoil of contending worries he reached Downing Street, where, to his infinite disappointment, his noble friend was not; he had left St. James's, and the king had left town; but as the premier was in cabinet, and as no time could be specified for the duration of its sitting, the marquess left word that he would call in the morning, and retraced his steps.

In going up again, he met most of the few presentable people in town; and having bowed stiffly to one, smiled graciously upon another, and nodded to a third, he fixed upon the most gay and graceful of all our dandies to walk up St. James's Street homewards. Their conversation was scarcely of sufficient interest to be repeated; nor would the walk itself be worth our notice, had not the gratification the marquess felt in having under his protection one of the most popular, highly-born, and highly-bred earls in Lodge's list, at a season when peers were scarce, been somewhat damped by no less than two of those minor incidents by

which his lordship, as we have seen, was, above all men, peculiarly annoyed.

They reached the corner of Albemarle Street in safety, all the surrounding scenery, and its adjuncts and accessories, bringing strongly to the marquess's mind his wretched misadventure of the morning, when the crowd of coachmen and fellows plying for passengers — who block up the *trottoir* as effectually as their lumbering carriages choke up the middle of the street — becoming extremely inconvenient and disagreeable to Lord Massingberg, the marquess's companion, he began a short but vehement attack upon the odious nuisance by which they were really seriously inconvenienced.

"Upon my life," said his lordship, "these fellows seem to fancy that nobody except themselves has a right to the pavement; in consequence of which, we, who have nothing to do with their infernal hearses and coaches, are absolutely stopped on the king's highway, and put in bodily fear, without any chance of punishing the offenders."

"Monsters!" said Lord Snowdon.

"Exceeded only," said Lord Massingberg, "by those who get into their horrid caravans."

"Down the road! down the road! — Fulham — Fulham — Fulham! — Richmond — Brentford — Kew — Turnham Green — just going off! — Richmond — Richmond — Richmond!" said a dozen voices in a dozen different tones.

"Down the road this afternoon, my lord?" said one of the most resolute, coming up to the marquess, who endeavoured to escape him.

"What an infernal bore!" said Lord Massingberg.

"Horrid!" said the marquess.

"Wery sorry for the accident this morning, my lord," said the man, pertinaciously following up the governor general of India; "wery sorry, indeed, for the accident this morning, my lord; hope you didn't damage yourself gitting out — no fault of the horses — it vos the haxletree vot snapped."

"Get away, sir!" said the marquess.

"Get avay!" answered the man; "it vos you; you vanted to get avay when the ondibus broke down, vithout

forking out your fare — there's a lord for you — my eye, there he goes!"

"What does the scoundrel mean?" said Lord Massingberg, to whom, of all the birds in the air, or lords of the creation, Lord Snowdon would least have desired the incident of the earlier part of the day to be known.

"Oh, nothing — nothing," said the marquess; "it is one of those unfortunate mistakes I so frequently suffer by, from being mistaken for Mister Somebody — a player at Covent Garden."

"But he called you 'my lord,'" said the earl.

"Ah, then," said the marquess, "if he did, I conclude that in the morning he mistook the player for me, — it comes to the same point."

The Earl of Massingberg was not to be so deceived. He was a wit amongst lords, and a lord amongst wits; like the parrot in the fable, he said nothing, but he thought the more. The results were particularly disagreeable to his excellency the governor general, as we may, perhaps, find out hereafter.

There is a proverbial, not very *recherché*, phrase, about "getting out of the frying-pan into the fire." Never was it better illustrated than at the moment when the unlucky recognition of the marquess by the omnibus driver had been overcome. The friends had passed across Dover Street, when a scream, or, rather, shout, was heard from the top of a Bath and Bristol coach, which, borne on the breeze, seemed like a call upon "Lord Snowdon." He heard, but heeded it not; he was too surely conscious that he could not be deceived in the sound; he hurried on, and almost dragged his friend along with him; but the south-east corner of Devonshire House wall had scarcely been achieved, before he was plucked by the sleeve.

"How d'ye do, my lord?" was the first salutation of a plump rosy-cheeked man, enveloped in a white bear skin coat, with his head well tied up in a silk handkerchief, over which he wore an oil-skin covered hat — everything bespeaking preparation for a journey.

"Another mistake," said Lord Massingberg.

"I—I——"

"Oh, my lord," said the traveller, "you don't know me in this gear. My missus and I are off — outside's the best this weather, and cheapest in all weathers; but I was determined, as I did chance to see you, to ask you if what we heard down at Shuttlework is true?"

"Oh, said his lordship, "Mr. Wiseman — I see. — The mayor of my town," added the marquess to Lord Massingberg.

"Ah," said Mr. Wiseman — for Wiseman it was — "that's just *it* — that's where it is! We have heard down at Shuttlework, that your lordship wants to sell us. Now I tell you just what it is — we won't be sold; and they say that the price of our independence is to be the governorship of the West Hingees, or some such place, for you."

"Mr. Wiseman," said the marquess, "you have dined, I presume?"

"Yes, that I have," said Wiseman, very much inclined to be extremely impudent, "and have drank tea, too, my lord — and so I hope I may always be able to do — and no thanks to your lordship; but I can tell you, for I am determined to have my say out, that the corporation of Shuttlework are not a flock of sheep, to be driven whereever we are wanted to go; no, nor to follow a bell-wether wherever he may want to lead us."

The pride and indignation of the marquess were boiling over, but he knew he must controul both; he had a great game to play, and was not to knock over the board because he was thwarted in his first move.

"My dear Mr. Wiseman," said his lordship, "nobody wishes either to lead or controul you; and as for going governor to the West Indies, I assure you, upon my honour, no such thing is even probable."

"Well, then, it's to the East," said Wiseman, "and that's just the same."

"And where did you get this information?" asked Lord Snowdon.

"Why I got it from a friend of your own, my lord," said Wiseman; "Bill Richardson, which I met this very blessed morning in Bishopsgate Street."

"Who is your friend Bill Richardson?" whispered Lord Massingberg.

"Heaven knows!" said the marquess.

"I don't think Heaven has much to do with it, my lord," said Wiseman; "Bill Richardson told me this very morning that you had promised him the living of Silgrove, and that he had got a letter by the twopenny post from his brother, which is a soldier officer quartered somewheres near town, and he told him that you were to be governor general of something—what, I didn't rightly understand—and that you had changed sides in consequence thereof."

"And pray," said the marquess, who began to be seriously annoyed at the *vraisemblance* of the history, "who may Bill Richardson be?"

"Why as good for nothing a chap as ever lived," said Wiseman, "though I say it, as am his friend. His father was a regular gentleman, with no money, but all right else—had a large family—the soldier officer has got on uncommon well—there are four or five more on 'em; but Bill is in the clergy line; and, somehow, did something not quite straight and even, and so he has been rather down in the world; however, your lordship has put him up, and great thanks to you, but—I——"

Here the orator was checked by the imperious call of the guard of the coach by which the mayor was about to transport himself to the country.

"I can't stop, my lord," said Wiseman; "I thought I'd tell you what we have heard—my missus is at top of the coach, I must not keep her waiting—but I dare say Bill Richardson will do at Silgrove, and so—I can't stop a minute. You'll come down amongst us and contradict the report about——"

Here he was hurried away by the coach people, and Lord Snowdon was left overwhelmed. He affected to treat it as the joke of a drunken vulgar fellow; but two things were evident to himself—one, that he had been persuaded to disgrace his patronage by the promise of Silgrove to the black sheep of the Richardsons; and the other, that the secret which he had so cautiously confided to the Oldhams had been blabbed. These two discoveries struck deep into

his heart, and he resolved that the very first step of the following morning should be, that of rescinding his promise to one of the Richardsons, and insisting upon the exclusion of the other. Whether he might eventually fulfil the pledge he had given of putting the lancer upon his staff, depended upon circumstances; but the communication of his half tipsy *master*, the mayor of Shuttlework, had by no means tended to restore his tranquillity.

At the corner of Grosvenor Street the companions parted, and the marquess returned to his house. He had been absent rather more than two hours; and during that period had so far relented in his violence that he rather feared than condemned the counteracting violence of his son — a violence which nothing could have justified but the tone which he had himself heard adopted towards his sister, and the certainty that she and her outraged friend, Miss Everingham, would, if they remained where they were, be constantly subjected to the society and impertinences of Lady Katharine Oldham and her daughter.

Lord Snowdon saw the delicacy and difficulty of this last part of the proceeding, and had despatched a servant, whom he had ordered down to Brookes's (into which he went 'merely to write a letter,' for he had of late carefully abstained from the menagerie,) to Richmond, to inform Lady Katharine, that circumstances had occurred which would render it more agreeable for him to go to her than for her to come to town to him. This left him a fair field in the morning, and if he could not reconcile matters after dinner, he thought he should have the early part of the following day to bring his family matters to a favourable conclusion, delighted as he was sure all its members would be at the announcement which he should have to make to them of his magnificent appointment, certainly, and of the attainment of the blue riband in all probability.

It was here that he deeply felt and bitterly lamented the extreme difference which existed between his own character and that of his son; indeed, he was almost apprehensive, with *his* views and principles, that he would not feel sufficient gratification at his father's sudden and, to him, of course, unexpected aggrandisement, to overcome the filial

indignation which he had so very unreservedly expressed. However, the satisfaction which, of course, Lord Malvern must feel at the acquisition to his family of new honours and new dignities, the rays of which would descend upon himself, might, perhaps, do something in the way of quelling the asperities which at the moment existed; and if he found the ordinary manifestation of his personal and paternal authority failed to pacify the contending elements in the evening, the influence of his private domination might, perhaps, be more readily submitted to at a moment when his public importance was so very much increased.

He knocked at the door of his house with his usual confidence and dignity: he entered the hall and passed onwards to the library; a servant lighted the candles that were on the table.

"Let Lady Hester know," said the marquess, "that I am come in, and wish to speak to her and Lord Malvern."

"Lady Hester is not within, my lord," said the servant.

"Where is she?"

"I don't know, my lord," said the servant.

"Where is Lord Malvern?"

"Not here, my lord," was the answer.

"Take my compliments to Miss Everingham, and beg her to come to me," said the marquess.

"Miss Everingham is not here, my lord," said the servant.

"Send Lady Hester's maid to me, sir," said Lord Snowdon.

"Her ladyship took her maid with her, my lord," replied the servant. "Mr. Hall, my lord, I believe has a letter for your lordship."

"Send him here instantly," said the marquess.

These announcements startled the marquess. Had he carried his lofty authority over his children a little too far? Had the cord been so tightly strained that it had snapped? Had his son dared to realise his intentions, and act up to his threats?

"If he have," said the marquess to himself, "he is a mean, unworthy scion of our house. He knows that

without his accordance I cannot make a settlement on Elizabeth, and he dares me to exert not my power over his sister — for power I have none — but my influence, because, if I controul her most derogatory passion, he is able to impede and thwart my happiness."

His lordship had scarcely concluded this brief soliloquy when Hall entered the library.

"You have a letter for me, Hall?" said the marquess.

"Yes, my lord," said Hall.

"From whom?"

"Lord Malvern, my lord."

"Where is Lady Hester?" asked the marquess.

"I do not know, my lord," answered the servant.

"How did she go hence?"

"In Lord Malvern's carriage, my lord," said Hall.

Here the colloquy ended. Hall left the room, and the marquess proceeded to read the letter which his son had addressed to him. These were its contents:—

'My Lord,

"After a mature consideration of the circumstances which occurred, and the conversation which took place before your departure from Grosvenor Square, I have come to the conclusion that the removal of my sister from under your roof is the best and wisest measure I could adopt — for her sake — for yours, and, indeed, for the sake of all of us.

"Neither her health nor spirits are sufficiently strong to bear up against the effect of scenes similar to that of which I so strangely became a witness. The difficulties which she would have to encounter by a protracted stay in Grosvenor Square, and the discussions in which she would be engaged during the time preceding your marriage, would, in my opinion, be greatly augmented and seriously embittered by the arrival and residence there of your future marchioness and her mother.

"Your right to act in whatever way you may deem most agreeable or advantageous to your own prospects, neither she nor I venture in the slightest degree to impugn; but we feel that in the position in which we are

placed — Hester more particularly — that it is most desirable to avoid the possibility of a recurrence of incidents similar to that to which we have been exposed, and that it would be more candid on our parts, and more respectable in the eyes of the world, to withdraw ourselves, to make way for the new mistress of your house, and maintained, when we could do so, without effort or dissimulation, a respectful intercourse with a father, to whom we feel ourselves bound by every tie of duty consistent with the dignity and integrity of our characters, and the principles which he himself has through our lives laboured to implant in our minds.

"It must be evident, that with the knowledge of the line Miss Oldham has chosen to adopt towards my sister, in her conversations with you, it is wholly impossible that they could meet cordially and ingenuously as friends. Surely it is better that they should not meet at all; at least not until Miss Oldham has assumed that title and character which, for your sake, we shall feel bound to recognise and respect.

"My beloved sister is not formed for hypocrisy or deception; and an interview between them so shortly after the knowledge of the young lady's expressions concerning her, would produce nothing but open hostility. This was my reason for so hastily putting my plan of withdrawing Hester from your protection into execution. I am sure that I am right.

"I ought, however, to say, that I firmly believe that I should have had more difficulty in persuading Hester to accede to my proposition for her change of residence, had not Miss Everingham positively declared, that no power should induce *her* to remain another night — another hour — under your roof. The dread of being deserted by her oldest, dearest, I may almost say, only female friend, overcame the apprehensions which she naturally felt in taking so decided a step. I am the responsible person for her conduct. I am ready to vindicate and justify it to the world, if called upon to do so; and I repeat, that I am perfectly convinced I have best consulted the respectability of our family, by avoiding an *eclât*, of which we have

already been sufficiently made the victims, and which must inevitably follow an open declaration of hostilities.

"As it is, Lady Hester has done what no human being has a right to question, or any reason to marvel at. In the society of her brother and her dearest friend, she has left London for the residence of her aunt, Lady Ospringe, where she purposes remaining on a visit for some time. This announcement will neither startle nor surprise its hearers; and as you yourself have already expressed an opinion, that her presence at your marriage would not be desirable, what better mode of disposing of her for the present could have been hit upon than that which I have ventured to adopt; but which, had we waited to consult you upon it, could not have been arranged in a sufficiently short space of time to prevent the meeting to-morrow, which we so little desired to take place, and which, perhaps, might have met with a serious opposition from you?

"As the common report is, that ministers have appointed you to the governor-generalship of India — my authority is an officer of the —— lancers, who heard it direct from a Mr. Richardson, whom, as he says, you have appointed one of your aids-du-camp — and as Hester, of course, would not accompany you to the East, it is but a brief anticipation of the 'break-up,' which must then take place. Let me therefore hope, that the measure which I originated, and have enforced by every possible argument, and which Hester has, under my counsel, adopted, may appear less rash and more advisable, than at the first blush you might be disposed to consider it."

"Ungrateful son!" said the marquess, throwing down the letter, of which he had not yet finished the reading; "little did I think a child of mine could act upon so mean a principle as Malvern here exhibits. He comes to the house of his father, excites his sister to rebellion against him, persuades her to quit his protection, and seek that of a relation whom he knows that father hates; and having done so, triumphs in the outrage, because he also knows that circumstances place that father in his power, and enable him to make his terms for a reconciliation, and name as conditions for rescuing his parent from pecuniary

difficulties, the pardon of his ungrateful and undutiful children. Well; God help me!" saying which, the marquess resumed his perusal of the epistle.

"I have already stated that I am the author of the measure. I also admit that I seriously apprehended your anger, which I now endeavour to deprecate. But lest it should be within the scale of possibility that you should imagine me capable of presuming upon the embarrassments which you have represented to me, and which it is in my power to obviate, to take such a step, I considered it just and proper, and I hope you will consider it as an earnest of the feelings of a heart naturally devoted to you, to relieve you from all such suspicions or apprehensions. I had a duty, as I believe, to do and perform by my sister— I had a duty to perform by you; — which had the precedence, if you really know me, I think you will not doubt.

"Before I quitted town with Hester and Miss Everingham, I called on your solicitor, whom I found literally on the point of starting for Calais to meet me with the deeds and papers necessary for my signature. In order to put you entirely at your ease with regard to the settlements, I have signed all that was necessary; and he tells me that thirty-five thousand pounds will on Monday be placed at your immediate disposal. Having relieved my mind of this, I felt comparatively happy, and doubly strengthened in my persuasions to Hester.

"If either of us may hope to hear from you, your letter to either or both of us, will reach us, of course, at Lady Ospringe's, where we hope to arrive, either late this evening, or, should Hester's health require a stop on the road, early to-morrow. Believe me, I have acted for the best, and I trust we shall meet with that favour at your hands, which, until the present moment, we have never hazarded.

"MALVERN."

These last paragraphs overcame the austerity even of Lord Snowdon — feelings alien to his bosom filled his heart — tears, strangers to his eyes, bedewed his manly

cheek — it was a dreadful conflict — passions and feelings, all of different characters, were at strife within, while he himself was struggling against all!

It lasted but a short time — indeed he could not long have endured it — an effect, however, was to be produced, and when he rang the bell for his valet to come to dress him, there was no evidence of the dreadful contest left!

CHAPTER XIV.

This struggle for effect, cost the marquess much, but it succeeded; and during the four hours which were subsequently consumed in dining with Sir Harry Winscott, (whom the reader may remember as having been too late for dinner at Lionsden,) and in the social intercourse, more brief than ever in these days of moderation, which took place subsequently, he appeared the same high and mighty, graciously condescending being as usual. It was when he returned to his home, his now solitary home, that he began to feel the effect of what had occurred within the last four and twenty hours.

Hester, his once loved child, was gone — and how gone? driven from his house by harshness, and the dreadful anticipation of greater evils yet to come. His son, too, was absent, under the influence of similar feelings! And although the liberal and dignified manner in which he had conducted the whole of his plan, of rescuing his sister from the ills and inconveniences with which she was assailed and threatened, demanded, as it deserved, the admiration of his father, yet the evidence which her departure from under his roof afforded of the impotency of his authority, wounded him to the very heart.

With these thoughts in his mind, it was impossible that he should avoid the consideration of what had reduced him to a situation which he felt to be so uncomfortable. At the suggestion, or rather upon the information, flippantly given by the former play-fellow, and future mother-in-law of his child, he had been betrayed into coarseness and

harshness, of which he himself felt ashamed. In his anger he had outraged and affronted the being, who for twelve or fourteen years had been the faithful protectress and friend of his daughter, and rendered it impossible for her longer to remain an inmate of his family: this had been the work of one short hour — a work, too, to which his son had been a witness.

Well! it could not be recalled; apology or retractation were out of the question. He bitterly regretted what had happened; but, if his heart had been laid open at the moment, it seems probable that the severest remorse he endured upon the subject, arose from a conviction, or at least an apprehension, that he had compromised his dignity by his violence, and exhibited those infirmities of his character, which through life he had been labouring to conceal.

He turned to another part of the family picture, and felt no very great reason to be pleased with the general appearance of things in that quarter. It was clear that Elizabeth and her mother had betrayed his confidence with regard to the governor-generalship; it made no difference, to be sure, because the point was settled, and in eight and forty hours his nomination would be publicly announced: still he had made a point which they had disregarded; and the mention of the aids-du-campship, which he had requested them not to speak of, was another breach of confidence which annoyed him; but most of all was he annoyed, that they had prevailed upon him to bestow his valuable piece of preferment upon a person, who, if the right worshipful the mayor of Shuttlework could be depended upon, was wholly and specially unworthy of the station in which he was to place him. All this irritated the marquess, but made no alteration in his feelings or opinions as regarded his future wife: to the garrulous absurdity of her mother, and her disposition to exhibit her general knowledge of all subjects, he attributed these disagreeable circumstances; and resolved, the moment he saw her, to let her ladyship feel the force of his indignation, and, above all things, determined to rescue the living of Silgrove from the grasp of the ragamuffin "Bill Richardson."

The part of the transaction which puzzled him most was that upon which it had been impossible to afford him any information: he could not imagine whence arose the pointed and decided opposition to his marriage with Miss Oldham. Miss Everingham was on the very point of enlightening him at the moment when he so grossly affrónted her; what the result of her communication would have been it is impossible to surmise. Her feeling certainly was, that as he had now severed the tie which bound her to his family, there was no longer any necessity for keeping terms with him, and she felt convinced that as Miss Oldham had betrayed to him the attachment of Lady Hester to Mr. Burford, she might, upon a fair principle of retaliation, show up Miss Oldham for her former desperate flirtation with Lord Malvern.

One consideration checked her; she was conscious that she had herself entertained hopes of filling the place in the family which Elizabeth Oldham was destined so soon to occupy, and fancied the possibility of a supposition that she had been urged to this *denouement* by that most ungentle and unfeminine of all our passions, jealousy. This kept her silent, and left the marquess in the dark upon that chapter of the family history, which, as we have already seen, puzzled him the most.

In the course of worldly events, there arise, at times, some most curious coincidences. Generally, these are matters of accident; sometimes they are aided in a slight degree by the management of individuals interested in their results. Now there is nothing very remarkable in the fact that Lady Ospringe should have taken a house for several months at Brighton, because Brighton, from October till March, is healthy, agreeable, full of company, and brilliant in sea and sunshine even in the coldest weather. As Lady Ospringe had a house at Brighton, nothing could be more natural or more convenient than that Lord Malvern, having made up his mind to the measure which we know he put in execution, should carry his injured sister and her outraged friend thither, as the most suitable and proper place for their residence under existing circumstances, and till some permanent arrangements might be made for Lady Hester's establishment; but it certainly *was*

a curious coincidence that the Burfords, without knowing any of these circumstances, not aware either of Lady Ospringe's residence at Brighton, or of Lord Malvern's design to carry his rescued victims to that place, and put them under her ladyship's protection, actually removed themselves thither on the very day succeeding their arrival in town, and immediately after Charles Burford had dispatched his letter to Lord Snowdon resigning the living of Silgrove.

This was a curious coincidence, but a purely accidental one; the only help given to its occurrence being afforded in a suggestion of Lord Malvern to Burford, that if, as he understood, his mother intended to visit the coast after her London business was concluded, he considered Brighton as the most agreeable and convenient place for the purpose; for it should be understood that during the journey from Paris to Calais, Maria and his lordship had formed a sort of innocent league against her mother and brother, and that in those snatches of conversation which, by occasionally detaching her from their *surveillance* during their walks and explorations he contrived to enjoy, she had expressed to him, not only her surprise at her mother's hurried departure from Paris, but her utter disbelief in the existence of any real cause for her journey to London.

This artless and ingenuous confession of Maria's only confirmed him in his suspicion of the real motive by which the conscientious and careful parent had been actuated in breaking up her Parisian establishment. The very caution she had observed convinced him that he had suffered his real feelings of admiration for her daughter to betray themselves. This conviction served as the strongest possible incentive in his mind to pursue the object which had been thus carefully withdrawn from him, and — so difficult is it to know how to manage hearts — the very plan which she had laid to prevent the formation of an attachment on the part of either of the young folks, had produced a diametrically opposite effect upon both.

When Lord Malvern arrived in London, and found the Burfords gone, the truth came home to his mind. Maria was right in her suspicions that no cause, such as her mother spoke of, existed for this journey, and therefore, of

course, he was right in his surmises about her real reasons for having undertaken it. The Burfords had no idea of Lord Malvern's coming to England. They did not anticipate that he, jealous of his sister's honour, and resolved, at all hazards, to maintain her character, and support her respectability, would start for London the moment he had heard of the failure of her marriage, to obtain an explanation of Lord Elmsdale's conduct; and, therefore, as they literally *had* no business in London, they immediately exchanged the dusty smoky apartments of their metropolitan hotel for the bright sunshine and bracing air of the free and independent borough of Brighthelmstone, little dreaming that their much-loved, much-dreaded friend, would so soon become an inhabitant of it also.

The artificial part of the coincidence, then, amounts to this, — the fact that the Burfords were gone to Brighton, strengthened Lord Malvern in his opinion that the best place to which he could possibly take his sister would be her aunt's residence in that watering place; and by this wise and salutary decision, it turned out that before twenty-four hours had elapsed, Lady Hester Plinlimmon, while taking the air on the esplanade in front of Brunswick Terrace, was encountered by her friend Mr. Charles Burford, brought thither for the express purpose, but without his own privity or consent, by her noble brother, the Right Hon. Alfred Viscount Malvern.

If the Marquess of Snowdon, when he wrote a cold and dignified acknowledgment of his son's letter, thanked him for his conduct with regard to the settlements, and declined saying one syllable upon the subject of his daughter's removal from Grosvenor Square, had known all these additional circumstances connected with that incident, he would, perhaps, have been even more outrageous than he was, when, upon taking up the newspaper at breakfast on the very same day, he perused the following

JEU D'ESPRIT,

Upon the Richmond Omnibus breaking down when the Marquess of Snowdon was a passenger.

The Omnibus has broken down
With SNOWDON'S Marquess great,
It could not carry through the town
A man of *so much weight.*

"Ridiculous impertinence!" said his lordship, crumpling the paper in his hand, and dashing it upon the table — "this is too bad — I wish I had the fellow in Bengal!"

It was with difficulty he could prevail upon himself to read another line of the journal; he did, however, get the length of the immediately succeeding paragraph, which he found thus framed: —

"A cabinet council was held at the Foreign Office yesterday, immediately after the king's departure for Windsor. The council broke up at seven o'clock; and at half-past ten, the ministers assembled again at the house of the Lord Privy Seal, where they remained in deliberation until nearly two o'clock this morning. We have heard several rumours as to the results of this protracted consultation, but for the present we decline giving them publicity."

"I have no doubt," said the marquess to himself, "that the difficulty about my blue riband is greater than it at first appeared; of course, if they are hard pressed, I shall not insist — at least I can wait, and a pledge for the next ought, I think, to satisfy me. Besides, it is always well to have a little grievance to hark back to; so, upon the whole, perhaps the delay may not be so disadvantageous."

Pleased with the opportunity of exhibiting at once his power and his forbearance, the noble marquess continued eating his breakfast, and reading the news. His eye, however, constantly recurring to the odious bit of doggrel, which, absurd and contemptible as it was in itself, almost counterbalanced the self-satisfaction he enjoyed in the prospect of his public proceedings with the premier.

His lordship had arranged to dine with Lady Katharine and his intended at Richmond, having, as the reader will, perhaps, recollect, prevented their visit to town, under the impression that their meeting with Lord Malvern and Lady Hester might produce some unpleasant results; he little anticipating, at the time when he did so, that his son and laughter would, of themselves, relieve him from any chance of such consequences. This arrangement he still proposed to put into execution; but was most anxious to know, before he left town, the event of the previous night's discussion in cabinet, which it has been seen, with the natural

vanity of man generally, and of the marquess particularly, he attributed solely to the accumulating difficulties relating to an arrangement personal and peculiar to himself.

This last and greatest anxiety was destined soon to be terminated. While he was yet ruminating upon the past occurrences, and putting his ideas *en train* for the interview in Downing Street, a noise so loud and shrill, that even the aristocratic walls of Grosvenor Square reverberated with the sound, struck his ears; the uproar was continued — horns blew, and newsmen bellowed. What could have happened? "Second edition" was all he heard; and recollecting that in times of excitement, some of the newspapers were in the habit of publishing a second edition, which merely announced the intention of the editors subsequently to publish a third, he little heeded the cry. But his attentive servants anticipated the wishes which he was too dignified to express, and the "second edition" was laid upon his table. He took it up, and read: —

"We publish a second edition to announce to our readers the important fact of the resignation of ministers. In the cabinet which we stated to have been held yesterday afternoon, and at the subsequent meeting in the evening, which we also announced, it was determined that it was no longer possible for the present ministers to carry on the government. In consequence of this decision, the premier and the lord chancellor left town at an early hour this morning, and tendered their resignations, which his majesty has been pleased to accept; and we understand that Lord Salford has been sent for to take the king's commands on forming a new administration."

This seemed to be the *coup de grâce*. Could it be? What! go out of office without completing his appointment — without securing him his blue riband! What a game had he been playing! — sacrificing his principles and consistency, abandoning his friends and his party, just sufficiently to be disappointed of the two great objects of his life, and that too at the moment when his friend and relation was sent for by the king to make a ministry, in which, if he had only been consistent and patient, he might have filled any office he had chosen to select, and

have under their domination obtained an extra blue riband by a dispensation of the statutes, if he could not have got one in the ordinary course by the dispensations of Providence.

This history the marquess in his heart believed to be "a weak invention of the enemy;" it could not be possible that his dear friend the premier could have resigned without either first consulting him who had made such sacrifices, or, at all events, securing the objects of his ambition from his successors; besides, of course he must have heard of it from better authority than a common newspaper. Psha! it was ridiculous!

His incredulity, however, was not sufficiently well grounded to overcome his anxiety, and he hastened forth upon an early walk in order to glean the news from the best quarters, or perhaps draw it from the fountain head. If anything could have been wanting to complete his worries and embarrassments, this last blow was *it;* and when he sallied out of Grosvenor Square he was in a state of excitement comical enough to those who were wholly independent of him, but terrible indeed to those who happened to be within the sphere of his influence, or under the power of his controul.

More tranquilly and peaceably passed the morning at Brighton; but perhaps the events which occurred during the next twenty-four hours on the margin of the sea, taken as affecting the interests of the Plinlimmons, were not less important than those which had turned up in the metropolis.

Lady Ospringe, who always treated the Marquess of Snowdon exactly as he disliked being treated, had a long conversation with her niece, Lady Hester, after her return from the walk in which, to her utter astonishment, she had been joined by her brother and Mr. Burford. Lady Hester, unused to the mild and gentle treatment which she experienced from her aunt upon this occasion — her ladyship having been previously apprised of the real state of Lady Hester's heart by Lord Malvern — confided to her the real truth, and admitted the existence, in all its earliest strength, of an attachment to Burford; at the same time

confessing the difficulty in which she unexpectedly found herself placed by his accidental visit to Brighton, at the moment which Lord Malvern had fixed upon for his retreat thither from Grosvenor Square.

"My dear Hester," said Lady Ospringe, "in this world there are no accidents so frequent as those which happen on purpose. Set your heart at rest about the delicacy and difficulty of your situation. Your brother knows your real feelings; he is determined that you shall marry the object of your choice; and I, who consider your father's conduct through life in a very different manner from that in which you estimate it, am quite satisfied that Malvern is right. He has obtained for himself, as we hear, high rank and great honours, and he has chosen to unite himself with a girl younger than his daughter, without consulting her views or ——"

"Oh, no, Lady Ospringe," said Lady Hester, "it is I who have marred all his prospects and overturned his arrangements: he never would have married until after I had been married, but for this untoward circumstance ——"

"Now, dear Hester," said the warm-hearted Lady Ospringe, "will you tell me the truth — will you answer me two questions? — I only ask two."

"Yes, aunt," said Lady Hester, "I promise you I will."

"Well, then, first," said Lady Ospringe, "you do *not* love Lord Elmsdale?"

"No," said Lady Hester, with an emphasis the most unequivocal.

"You *do* love Charles Burford? — What! no answer? Come, let me give you some encouragement to speak," said Lady Ospringe; "if you do, I can only tell you this: — I am rich enough to make a daughter more than happy in marriage with the man to whom she is attached. Hester, dear, it was so *I* married. I know what the blessings of domestic happiness are, and I have seen abundance of instances of the misery of ill-assorted matches. That your marriage with Mr. Burford can be so considered, I do not see; for it is not probable that such a man as *your*

father and my brother-in-law would have selected an individual to direct the future career of his son through life without having a high opinion of his merits and character. I have no daughter — no child, Hester, and it has always been my intention to make you my heir. How much more agreeable will it be to me to see you happy before I die, than to die in the hope only that you may be so afterwards. Your own fortune would be ample for all comfort in this marriage; but, in the first instance, I will double it — only however upon one condition, that when you are Lady Hester Burford you will make this your home, and trust to the affections of your mother's sister rather than to those of the flighty second wife of your lofty father."

"My dear aunt," said Lady Hester, "you are opening a prospect to me so very different ——"

"And so very agreeable," said Lady Ospringe. "Come, speak the truth, dearest — you *have* promised; — when I tell you that my mind is fixed upon the completion of this affair, and that you will secure *my* happiness by accepting my offer, perhaps I may encourage you to make a declaration."

"I cannot speak," said Lady Hester, who, unused to kindness, and overcome by her feelings, threw her arms round her aunt's neck and burst into tears.

As far as poor Lord Snowdon's views for "Hester dear" went, it seems tolerably evident that they were considerably damaged. But it is necessary for us to look at another part of Brighton during this same morning, where a scene of equally vital interest, but of a totally different character, was enacting, but which as deeply involved some of the personages of the same drama.

The delight of Lady Ospringe, who, with all her rank and wealth and influence, felt that she could secure her beloved niece from the ill effects of her father's frowns, and satisfied that she should secure her happiness by eventually uniting her to the man she loved, was weak in comparison with the pain and affliction of the amiable Mrs. Burford, who found herself, and her daughter, and her son, brought unconsciously and without the slightest pre-

vious intention, or concert, or agreement, into immediate contact and connexion with the persons of all others whom she was most anxious to avoid.

Some there are, no doubt, who will deny the credit of such a feeling as that which Mrs. Burford is here represented to entertain, and think that the anxiety she evinced to be rid of the association with Lord Malvern was merely affected, because it would seem that the union of her daughter with a man so placed in the world would be most desirable: but they are wrong; — a father, a calculating man, might have felt this desire and concealed it; and that there are mothers — as witness Lady Katharine Oldham, — who, with all the professions of allowing their daughters to choose for themselves — of course under certain limitations — proceed not only to the fair measure of preaching them into marrying for interest against their will, but the whole length of manual correction to enforce their decrees, is not to be denied; but really and truly Mrs. Burford was not one of these.

To say that her daughter's being Marchioness of Snowdon would be disagreeable to her, would be to say that which is not true. What she desired to avoid was exposing her child — a girl full of feeling, of admiration for the sort of talent and accomplishments which Lord Malvern possessed, to the possibility of forming an attachment, a happy result to which their relative positions in society rendered nearly impossible; and as we have seen, besides her affection for her daughter, she possessed a dignity of character and independence of spirit, which led her of all things most studiously to avoid anything which might possibly be construed into the assumption of an undue influence over the mind of a young nobleman, violently excited at the moment against his father, and not less against his future mother-in-law, by the most extraordinary combination of circumstances.

These were the feelings which actuated this exemplary woman; but what were her sensations when she discovered for the first time, that beyond her influence and without her knowledge, an engagement in a precisely similar degree to that which she so much dreaded, absolutely existed be-

tween her son and Lord Malvern's sister. It was the first time that she had heard of it, and it was disclosed to her by Lord Malvern himself in the absence of Burford, who, after the return of Lady Hester to her aunt's, had, at the express desire of his mother, taken his sister out for a "long walk" on the cliff.

Mrs. Burford's object in planning this excursion was to have the opportunity of speaking to Lord Malvern on the subject of his — to her extraordinary conduct — in contriving (which he had evidently done) a meeting at Brighton between her son and his sister. The conversation in which she at last succeeded in engaging his lordship took place, singularly enough, at the same time at which Lady Ospringe and Lady Hester were occupied in that dialogue of a somewhat similar nature which has just been recorded.

"Lord Malvern," said Mrs. Burford, "I am sure you will give me credit for being an affectionate parent; it is an anxious attachment for my child which emboldens me to speak to you to-day, and the very decided part you have taken renders it necessary I should speak out."

"My dear Mrs. Burford, say what you please," said Lord Malvern; "I am ready to vindicate the course I have pursued, and in which I am much strengthened by the countenance of my warm-hearted aunt, with whom, by the way, I am instructed to invite you and Maria to dine."

"Lord Malvern," said Mrs. Burford, "you must first hear me. Charles is, I am sure, worthy and honourable, and excellent in conduct and principles; but, indeed, Lord Malvern, you are incurring a heavy responsibility in encouraging the idea of his becoming a connexion of your family. Your father ——"

"Upon that point," said Lord Malvern, "my mind is made up. Hester and I have, through the medium of Lady Ospringe, received such incontrovertible evidence of my father's lamentable blindness with regard to the connexion he is forming, and at the same time such decided proofs of his unalterable resolution to fulfil his engagement, that we are totally cast off to seek our own fortunes. I have no desire to flatter *you*, nor to overrate Charles; bu

I know him to the very heart's core, and a more noble-minded, high-spirited gentleman does not exist on the face of the earth. My sister loves him; she was ready to sacrifice her affection to obedience, but nature prevailed, and she sank under the effort. My father, tutored by those who hate us, and seek to gain all possible influence over him, has widened the breach between us past all hope of a re-union. I therefore become the guardian of my sister's honour and happiness; and she has confided enough to me to make me know how the one is to be maintained and the other secured; therefore will I not hear a word more about it. I am not going to press the affair, or hurry it on; nor would it be right or proper that she should, for some time, enter into any such engagement as marriage until all the *eclât* of Lord Elmsdale's affair has blown over; but, sanctioned as my views are by the sister of her mother, Lady Hester, please God, shall be the wife of your son."

"You speak strongly, Lord Malvern," said Mrs. Burford, "and I really know not what to oppose to your proposition upon any ground but one. Your father, let him act as he may, is still your father; and only consider what his feelings will be when he knows that my son is the husband of his daughter."

"His feelings!" said Lord Malvern, "those we know already, because that heartless traitor in love and friendship, Miss Elizabeth Oldham, has put him in possession of the truth, as far as Hester's feelings go; and, as my father knows, when once the heart and mind of a woman are won, all the rest is but a secondary consideration in the 'book of fate.'"

"I admit that," said Mrs. Burford, "he may know what *her* feelings are, but I should anticipate much more serious results, if he found her ladyship married to the son of a poor clergyman, that son having previously been the object of his bounty and patronage."

"Do you know," said Lord Malvern, with a half comic, half malicious smile on his lip, "*I* have thought of that; but I have also hit upon a remedy for the evil — it struck me that the marquess might think it, in his phraseology, beneath Lady Hester Plinlimmon to marry the son of

Mrs. Burford. What do you think I have done, in order to check this disposition to run my friend Charles down?"

"I cannot imagine," said the old lady.

"Why, I have resolved," said his lordship, "to make it sound better, by contriving, with your permission and that of one other person, yet to be obtained, that Lady Hester, instead of marrying the son of the late Reverend Thomas Burford, shall unite herself to Charles Burford, the brother of the Right Honourable Viscountess Malvern."

"I don't comprehend you," said Mrs. Burford.

"You will, perhaps, understand it all this evening at my aunt's," said Lord Malvern. "My dear Mrs. Burford, I am resolved. I flatter myself that Maria will not object to this plan; and if she approve of it, I shall be made the happiest of men!"

"My lord," said Mrs. Burford, bursting into tears, "as Heaven is my witness, this is the event I most dreaded — this——"

"Oh! yes," said Lord Malvern, "this is the event which conjured up a law-suit in London, was to carry you off by the diligence, and did actually put you in the metropolis, out of which you were in so great a hurry to get, that I discovered the whole scheme. You are an excellent mother, and will make me an excellent mother-in-law — provided always that Maria——"

What a coincidence! — at this word the charming girl and her brother entered the room.

"Here she is," continued Lord Malvern, "to speak for herself."

"My mother in tears!" said Maria; "what has happened?"

"Maria," said Lord Malvern, "she cannot bear the thoughts of parting from you."

"I hope," said Miss Burford, "there is no chance of her being tried upon that point."

"It is one," said Lord Malvern, "upon which I have no intention of trying her at this particular moment. I now content myself, my dear girl, with conveying an invitation to you from my aunt to dine with her. Oh!" said he, seeing that she looked towards her mother — "mamma and all — she has already accepted — and you,

Charles, with whom, if you please, I will now take a stroll, allowing that dear sister of yours to hear from her exemplary mother's lips the determination that I have expressed, and which no power on earth, if she consent, will prevent my fulfilling. Remember, ladies, at seven my carriage shall call for you."

Saying which, Lord Malvern walked out of the room with his future brother-in-law, leaving the mother to communicate the conversation that had passed to her daughter, in which interesting *tête-à-tête* we must leave them for the present, just to see how matters are going on in London.

"All true, by Jove! all true!" said Lord Massingberg to the marquess, whom he met at the corner of Bruton Street; "out — all out! the thing's done — must be a dissolution — how do you stand — eh?"

The question was a most awkward one. The marquess had made every disposition for fulfilling all the conditions of his ratting. All his old principles were changed, all his new political arrangements had been made, and having, after five-and-twenty years' adherence to a losing party, quitted them just as they were coming into power, he had the satisfaction of finding himself deprived of the reward for his apostacy, and so fettered by circumstances, as to be obliged to continue his opposition to his friends at the approaching election, with the certainty of getting nothing on earth from their enemies.

It was all too clear — dirty-faced fellows, who neither shaved nor wore clean shirts diurnally, were to be seen smirking and junketting about the streets. Octogenarians laid on the shelf half a century before, were to be found tottering and toddling down to Westminster; while the carriages of the aspirants to high office were rolling about at the tails of the unpaid-for job horses, which had, for many a-year before, done nothing but drag them down to Brookes's, or lug them over the heavy western road, as far as that suburban relic of antiquity which has been so graphically described by the late Lord Byron.

This seemed to be the *acmé* of the marquess's misery and discomfiture. His governor-generalship was gone — his friends, like a suddenly-retiring army, had left their heavy baggage behind them — they had secured nothing

— it was an unconditional surrender — and as to the blue riband, that was lost in company with the oriental vice-royalty.

There was no hope for him — of that, he was certain. What effect would this extraordinary disappointment have upon his dear Elizabeth? To be sure he had no controul over events; all he had said to her of his appointment, he was justified in saying; and besides, as it was, there *was* some consolation even in his defeat. Elizabeth had expressed a dislike for India, and avowed her preference of "dear old Lionsden," to the more gaudy and distinguished splendour of Calcutta; *that* was something, and besides, there was another something, which, if possible, was yet more highly gratifying to him — he should get rid of the association of Mr. Frederick Richardson, the self-proclaimed aid-du-camp.

The mind, even such a mind as Lord Snowdon's, is charmingly elastic; he was stung to the quick by the overthrow of his hopes and expectations, and by the remorse which his venal and useless tergiversation could not fail to excite; but still, there were domestic life and quiet enjoyment before him. What were golden thrones and fawning slaves to the quiet bowers of Lionsden, and the fascinating society of his beloved Elizabeth? One thing was above all others certain, that having now secured from his son's liberality the financial part of his credentials, and being ready to conclude the settlement upon his future wife, (having severed every tie between himself and his family,) the sooner he married the better.

Previous, therefore, to his departure for Richmond, he proceeded to his solicitor, and gave him instructions for the immediate arrangement of all the necessary documents; and having concluded some other affairs of business, threw himself into his travelling carriage, and started for the home of his beloved, in whose society alone he now felt that he could forget the annoyances by which in every other sphere he could not fail to be haunted.

It *was* an annoyance, the just reward, it is true, of the fast and loose principle upon which he had been acting, and the undecided, shilly-shally game which he had been playing; but still his situation was one of peculiar hard-

ship. — Another week, perhaps another day, and he would have been all that he had ever wished to be. Now, he returned to the mansion of his betrothed, shorn of the honours which he had assumed, deprived of the patronage of which he had boasted, convinced, too, that as he must *per force* annul the appointment of Mr. Frederick Richardson to the aid-du-campship, it would be perfectly impossible for him to rescind his promise of the living of Silgrove, to his reverend and disreputable brother "Bill."

Away went the horses, and away went the marquess, laid back in his carriage and hidden from the public gaze, which, by the way, was not directed towards him. No object attracted his attention during the whole *trajet*, except indeed the spot never to be forgotten by him on Barnes Common, where he had ventured into that dreadful receptacle for the living from which he had been so painfully ejected in St. James's Street.

Richmond achieved, the hill partly mounted, the marquess was at the door of Lady Katharine's extremely pretty villa: the carriage was opened, and out sprang (with an effort, it must be confessed) the matured yet expectant lover.

He entered the house — all seemed silent — Elizabeth was not singing — the dogs were not barking — the grim grey governess was not playing waltzes, nor, strangest of all, was Lady Katharine talking; one or two servants whom his lordship encountered slunk out of the way; and Miss Oldham's maid, who was looking over the ballusters of the gallery into the hall, rushed into one of the bedrooms which opened into it, the moment she caught Lord Snowdon's eye.

The marquess proceeded to the drawing-room, nobody was there — in the *boudoir* — nobody — in the billiard-room, nobody. "Happy circumstance," thought his Lordship, "Mr. Frederick Richardson is absent to-day at least; and besides getting rid of his frivolity and impertinence, I shall escape the horror of being obliged to explain to *him*, why I cannot fulfil my promise of putting him on my staff."

His lordship promenaded the rooms — looked at himself in every glass, even in a small round one in a green

morocco case, which lay upon one of the three hundred and sixty-five well covered tables, which were scattered about the apartments.

A servant entered the *boudoir*, and mentioned that Lady Katharine would be down as soon as possible.

"Is Miss Oldham at home?" said the marquess.

"I don't know, I am sure, my Lord," said the man, with an expression of countenance which clearly indicated that he did.

The marquess sauntered to a sofa, and took up a newspaper; there it was again! the same infernal "*jeu d'ésprit*" upon his tumble in the omnibus. He seized the journal and stuffed it into his pocket, hoping by this magnanimous act to check the circulation of his disgrace through the servants' hall and housekeeper's room, as if all the underlings of the household did not make a point of reading the newspapers long before they permitted Lady Katharine to see them.

After a considerable delay, for which he could not account, Lady Katharine's maid appeared, with her eyes very red indeed, and begged his Lordship to come up to her lady's room.

"What, is Lady Katharine ill?" said his lordship.

"Ill, my Lord?" said the maid; "nothing can be worse. You got my lady's letter, my lord?"

"Letter! no—what letter?" said the marquess.

"My lady will tell you all herself—oh, dear! oh, dear!" said the unhappy *soubrette*, "what shall we do?"

The marquess, considerably mystified by all these appearances, and thinking, by Elizabeth's non-appearance, that her mother was seriously ill, followed the "lovely Thais" who "led the way" in considerable anxiety; not that he would have cared in the slightest degree if Lady Katharine had been gathered to her fathers or mothers that very day, except inasmuch as such an event as her death would naturally postpone that, for the immediate occurrence of which he was now so anxious. He entered the apartment redolent with Eau à Bruler, Eau de Cologne, and all the "perfumes of Arabia."

"Lady Katharine," said the marquess, approaching the

bed upon which her ladyship lay extended, "this is a sorry sight: I trust you are not seriously ill?"

"Oh, my dear lord!" said Lady Katharine; "leave the room, Hobkirk — shut the door — go away! What am I to do? what am I to say? I remember well enough — I was very young at the time, when my poor grandmother, Lady Manningtree — she was the sister, you know, my lord, of the famous Sir Tilbury Todd — that man who — oh, dear me, what shall I do? — *I* don't know — as poor dear Doctor Simpson used to tell me — yet what can I say?"

"What *is* the matter?" said the marquess, knowing that he must wait for the unravelment of the history in her own fashion.

"Matter!" continued Lady Katharine, "oh, that girl! — well — Elizabeth, to be sure, I never could have thought it! — though I do recollect old Mrs. Bamfoozle, of Dragelthorp — the place her husband bought of my poor uncle George — she afterwards married Lees, the great wine merchant. By the way, he failed for four hundred thousand pounds, and paid sixteen and ninepence in the pound — she used to say to me — oh, dear me — what *shall* I do?"

"But, dear Lady Katharine, what is it?" said Lord Snowdon, "where is Elizabeth?"

"Elizabeth!" screamed Lady Katharine, in a voice emulative of the largest and boldest peacock that ever announced bad weather, "oh! that's it! oh, that girl! — dear Lord Snowdon, what can I do? — she's gone, gone!"

"Gone whither?" said the marquess.

"Oh! I never thought it!" sobbed her ladyship; "I'm sure that Frederick Richardson — oh! I believe it was all that Mr. Losh! and only to think, his great aunt was maid of honour to Queen Charlotte! — oh! yes, and his father an eminent merchant in Liverpool. By the way, that railroad — but I must not think of that now — twenty miles an hour — but ——"

"Yes! but what of Elizabeth?" repeated his lordship

"Oh! then," said Lady Katharine, "you didn't get my letter? dear me! I sent it by Robert the groom — that man never failed me before — I had him from Colonel

Windmill, your friend, Lord Snowdon — with a very good character. By the way, his wife told me — but never mind — Elizabeth is gone, my dear lord!"

"Gone where, I ask?" repeated the marquess.

"Oh! Heaven knows," said her mother; "you killed her with talking about India. By the way, if you never had got that appointment, you would not have lost her: she could not bear the tigers, and the ships, and the hyenas, and the nabobs, and all that. Mr. Anderson, of Cockelford, told her such a story of a kangaroo ——"

"Lost Elizabeth!" said the marquess, "how lost her?"

"She's gone, my dear lord! ruined past redemption!" — said Lady Katharine, "run away with Frederick Richardson last night — by the way, what a night it was for them — rained so hard — I ——"

"What, eloped!"

"Exactly," replied Lady Katharine; "gone for good — how or which way, Heaven knows! She left me a note — it is enclosed in my letter to you — describing her horror at the match. I ought to have known it would not answer, Frederick and she were such friends. To be sure, as Mr. Losh said — but the ——"

"Madam!" said the marquess, "am I to understand — for I can understand very little you say — that *your* daughter, *my* intended wife, has eloped with Mr. Frederick Richardson?"

"That's it," said Lady Katharine; "what a deal of trouble you have saved me; yes — that's the whole of it — as Shakspeare says, 'brevity is the soul of wit,' and ——"

"Wit! madam," said the marquess, "what do you mean by wit? are you in your senses, and venture to trifle with me under such circumstances?"

"Trifle!" said Lady Katharine, "I have no desire to trifle; I tell you the truth — and that, my poor dear mother used to say — by the way, she was one of the first women who left off wearing powder — she used to say ——"

"I have not the slightest inclination to hear what she used to say, madam," said the marquess; "it seems that I have no farther business here at any rate. I conclude I shall find your letter in Grosvenor Square when I return.

that I am surprised at such a gross and glaring want of taste in your daughter, I admit ; but do not suffer yourself to believe, ma am, that I am in the slightest degree mortified."

" Oh ! I dare say not," said Lady Katharine ; " the truth is, as my uncle George used to say — he, poor dear man, lost his leg at Walcheren — by the way, what a lamentable affair that was ——"

" Madam ! I cannot any longer listen to this gibberish," said the marquess ; " your daughter must be mad."

" So all girls are when they are in love," said her Ladyship ; " she cares about nothing but pleasing herself, as Miss Everingham told her — dear good soul she is — that when Lord Malvern was himself so desperately in love with her ——"

" Malvern in love with whom, ma'am ?" said the marquess.

" Elizabeth !" said Lady Katharine.

" My son ! ma am," said Lord Snowdon, " is it possible that I have only now discovered — and that at the moment in which I least expected it — the cause of the apparently groundless hostility of Malvern to my marriage with your daughter ? is it possible that human nature can be so depraved ? that you, conscious as you must have been, by the confession you have this instant made, of the existence of such a feeling on the part of Alfred, should have sanctioned the negociations which have been going on for the bestowal of her hand upon *me*, and which are only now, providentially I must say, broken off, by her own repugnance to so unnatural an union ?"

" Oh, dear !" said Lady Katharine, " you are quite mistaken : she never cared for Malvern — never a bit — but she was desperately in love with Frederick Richardson ; and so ——"

" Frederick, ma'am," said the marquess, repeating the word in a tone precisely similar to that in which she uttered it, and wholly unconscious in his rage of either what he spoke or acted, " it is clear that I have been made a dupe, and you, my Lady Katharine, have been

an accessory to the fraud! Console yourself with the reflection, that while you have successfully marred the happiness of myself and my family, you have ruined the prospects of your own. I hope never to hear more of you so long as I live; for upon earth there are no two characters more despicable in themselves, or more hateful to me, than those of a heartless young woman, and a frivolous old one!"

Saying which, his lordship bounced out of the room, and hurrying down stairs, strode across the hall out of the door, out of the gates, out of the grounds, and away to the Star and Garter, (a sign under which, although destined temporarily to live there, it did not appear he had been born,) where his horses and carriage had been put up, and whence, in a few minutes, he took his departure for London.

Upon his arrival in Grosvenor Square, he found the letter from Lady Katharine, to which she had alluded, enclosing the note which Miss Oldham had left upon a table in her dressing-room. Lady Katharine's epistle was brief, blotted, unconnected, and nearly illegible. Elizabeth's was written with no appearance of trepidation, but was all as soft, shining, and sweet-smelling as ever; it was concise, but to the purpose: —

"My dearest Mamma,

"You will be surprised at the step I have taken. Before this reaches you I shall be far on my way to become the wife of Frederick Richardson. His pride was wounded, and his feelings were strongly excited by the abrupt, and, I must say, coarse manner in which 'Old Snow' snapped him up at dinner the other day — it disgusted *me;* and when I found that I was to be transported to India, of which I have such a horror, I took Feederick's opinion, and we resolved to moderate our expectations, and be happy in mutual affection. We shall make it out, I have no doubt, and I feel myself quite fit to be a soldier's wife. You must soften the marquess's rage. Frederick has got six weeks' leave of absence, and you must not expect to see me until that period is expired, by which time the governor-general will be gone to his empire.

"You, my dearest mamma, will, I am convinced, forgive me, and assure yourself that what I have done, however imprudent it may at first appear, is the best and wisest step I could have taken. Adieu! you shall hear the moment I am married, for I shall want a million of things, which, of course, I had neither time nor opportunity to bring away with me. "Yours, affectionately,

"E. O."

This note, so characteristic of the flippant writer, and so clearly explanatory of the nature of her feelings towards Lord Snowdon, — somewhat, as it appeared, incautiously forwarded to his lordship, — consummated the violence of his rage; and while it did so, must exhibit to the reader the providential ill success of such heartless trickery. Had Elizabeth Oldham been what Lord Malvern once thought her, she would have become the wife of a man who loved her, and whom she seemed to love, and have been Marchioness of Snowdon into the bargain. As it was, she had recorded herself a heartless coquette in the first instance, and a mercenary hypocrite in the second; winding up her base career by becoming the wife of a needy coxcomb, who, in less than three years from their marriage, had dissipated his small fortune on the turf and at the gaming-table, and had gone upon half-pay, receiving the difference, which half-pay he eventually commuted at a price commensurate with his embarrassments rather than the real value of the income it produced.

Lord Snowdon threw down the letter — and, defeated in his public career, baffled in private life, at once the victim and dupe of his passion and pretensions, felt a misery of which he had never before been conscious. Whither was he to turn for succour or for consolation? For the sake of this worthless girl — at one time the pretender to his son's affections — he had broken up his establishment and scattered his family. The very circumstances which had been communicated to him by Lady Katharine, in a great measure justified Malvern's hostility to the match, which, before he had been apprised of them, he could neither comprehend nor forgive.

To Lady Hester, as we have seen, the marquess was

decidedly attached; he was proud of her, as well indeed he might be; and although his heart relented not in her favour, because she had rejected Lord Elmsdale, or, at least, had induced his abdication by the violent expression of her feelings, yet he could not but repent of the harsh and cutting language which he had used to her, at the suggestion of, and upon information furnished him, by her who once had been her dearest friend, but who was now one of her bitterest enemies.

That he must do something, was absolutely necessary: he availed himself of the favourable moment when his feelings had the mastery of his passion — for in fact he had but one — and resolved to proceed to Brighton; his anger towards his son being greatly subdued, and his resentment against his daughter very much moderated. That plan he put into execution, and reached Lady Ospringe's residence in the evening of the day on which the party invited, as the reader knows, was assembled round her hospitable board.

It is not permitted to us to know the results of this meeting; but after what has already been communicated to the reader, he may feel pretty certain that the arrangements made by the young people were eventually concluded as they had originally proposed. Nothing seems wanting to complete the triumph which nature and truth had achieved over the vanities of the world, and the deceptions of the heartless and unprincipled, but the eventual marriage of Lord Snowdon to the ill-used Anne Everingham. That such an event did actually take place, we cannot positively say; but this we know, that all the events of our little history tend most instructively to prove the value of the warning which Massinger gives in these admonitory lines: —

> "Take heed of Pride, and cautiously consider
> How brittle the foundation is, on which
> You labour to advance it."

THE END.

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